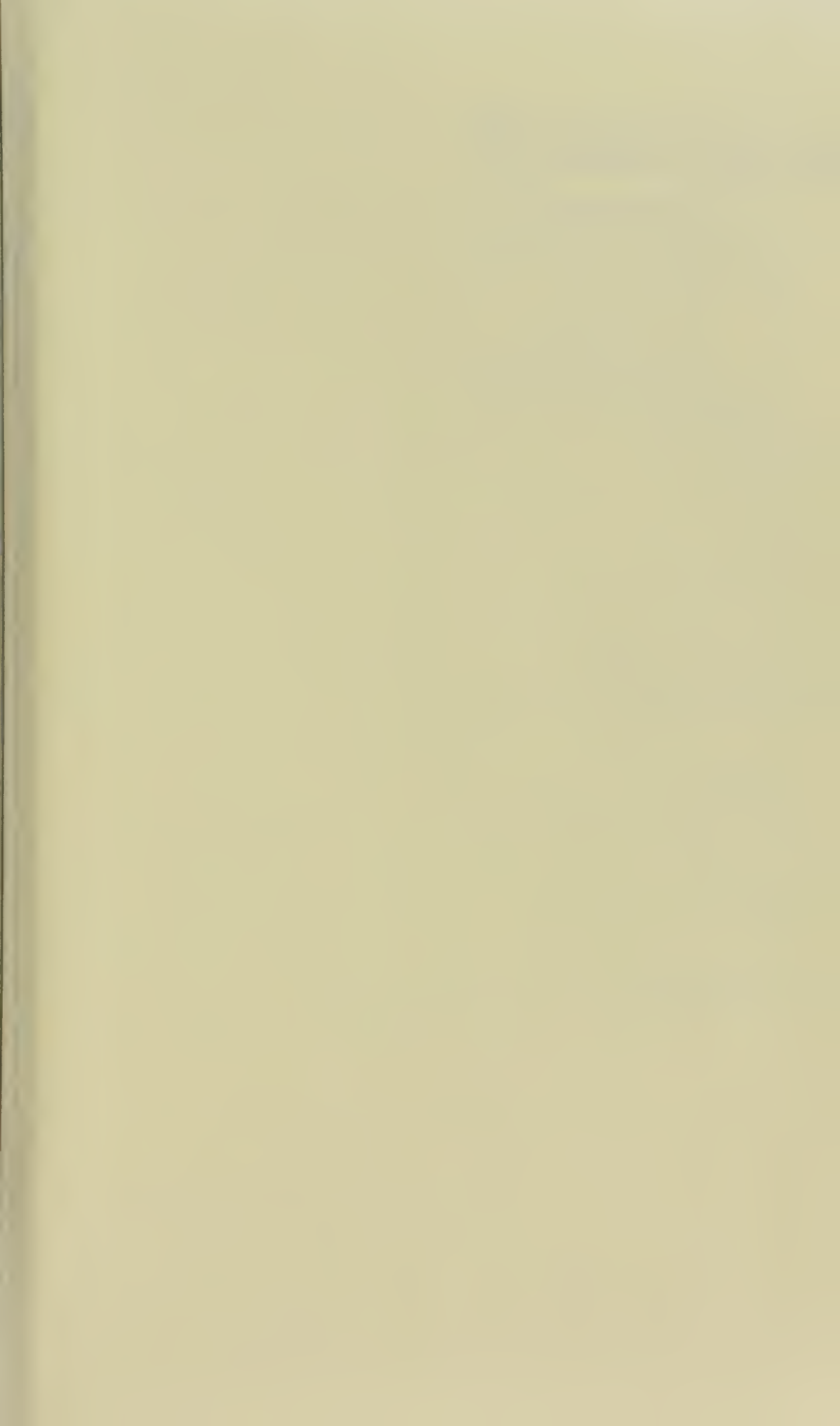
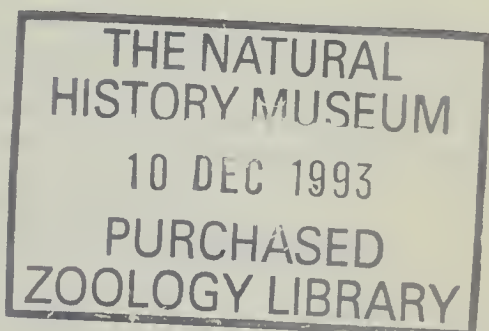


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Obituary: Bruce Campbell OBE PhD (1912-1993) *Professor C. M. Perrins*
Studies of West Palearctic birds 192 Bullfinch *Dr Ian Newton*



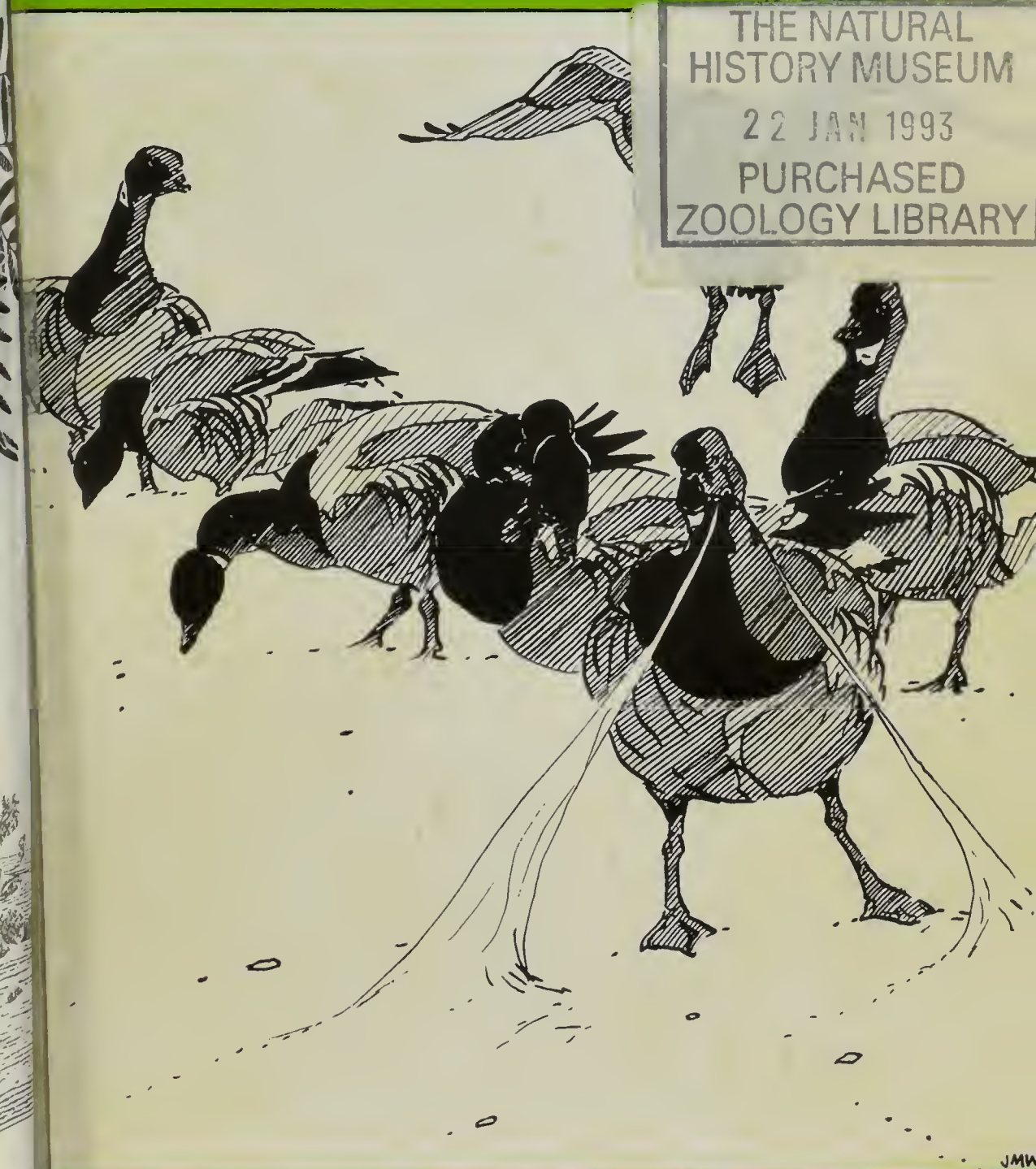
WINNER, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR 1993 (see pages 347-351): female Woodchat Shrike (with Montagu Harrier) in winter quarters, West Africa (*Richard Allen*)

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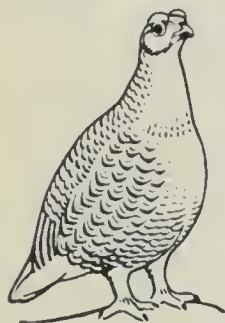
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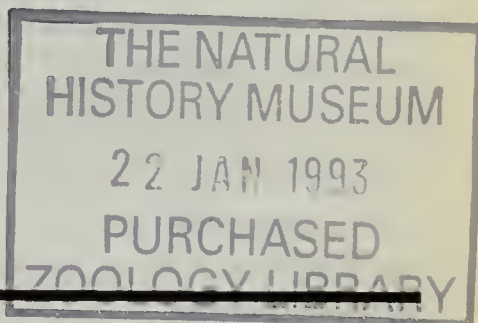
British Birds

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Editorial



'The "British Birds" List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds'

A list of the English names which have been adopted for use by *British Birds* is provided free for all subscribers as a pull-out supplement in the centre of this issue. We recommend the use of these English names in formal lists of Western Palearctic birds, and consider that they are appropriate for national lists, county bird reports and so on (though the use of scientific names is even more important).

Many of the names are simpler than those proposed for international use. For instance, there are many species of wren in the world, but only one in the Western Palearctic; whereas the obvious international English name for *Troglodytes troglodytes* is the North American name 'Winter Wren', for our region 'Wren' provides no chance of confusion. On the other hand, there are many species of wheatear in the Western Palearctic, so the English name for *Oenanthe oenanthe* requires a modifier, and the name Northern Wheatear has been adopted. Our major criterion, therefore, has been whether there is possibility of confusion in a Western Palearctic context.

We have followed the principle of minimum necessary change. A name is changed from current usage only if:

- (1) The current name creates a real chance of confusion within the Western Palearctic, either with one other species or with a group of species.
- (2) There has been a taxonomic change necessitating a new name.
- (3) The present name gives a misleading suggestion of an incorrect taxonomic relationship.
- (4) A significant improvement upon the current name is provided by a widely used alternative.
- (5) A helpful indication of relationships is provided by restoration of the group name.
- (6) An alternative name is already being used far more widely, or is being adopted internationally for a species peripheral to the Western Palearctic.

Unless confusion is possible between a species and a group name (as, for example, with the ringed plovers *Charadrius* and the golden plovers *Pluvialis*), we consider that there is no need for there to be a descriptive modifier for both members of a pair of species if there are already at least two elements to both names. For example, in the case of Black-headed Gull and Great Black-headed Gull, the former does not need to be called Common Black-headed Gull. Where such modifiers are already in use, however, a name change is not

justified in order to remove one name. For example, in the case of Great Spotted Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, there is no need to omit the word 'Great' (which, incidentally, really ought to be 'Greater' to contrast with 'Lesser').

We appreciate that vernacular usage inevitably results in shortening of names—Pinkfoot, Peregrine, See-see, Sora, Woodchat, Ortolan, and so on—but are convinced that formal bird names in print should, whenever possible, provide a clue to the birds' affinities for the benefit both of readers outside the species' range, who may be unfamiliar with its vernacular name, and of non-birdwatchers.

Some of the names included in the pull-out list will inevitably be changed in due course, when the IOC publishes its recommendations, but our intention is to leave this subject now, use these names, and concentrate on more important matters.

Our previous list of West Palearctic birds was compiled in 1978 and revised in 1984. Since then, opinions on the racial or specific status of certain forms have evolved (e.g. the well-publicised separation of Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* and American Golden Plover *P. dominica*, formerly regarded as races of a single species, *Brit. Birds* 80: 482-487). Assessing the merits of such instances, we have now adopted the following taxonomic changes:

- (1) Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* split to form three species: Madeira Petrel *P. madeira*, Cape Verde Petrel *P. feae* and Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis*.
- (2) Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* split to form two species: Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus* and Mediterranean Shearwater *P. yelkouan*.
- (3) Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus* split to form two species: Striated Heron *B. striatus* and Green Heron *B. virescens*.
- (4) Tawny/Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax* split to form two species: Tawny Eagle *A. rapax* and Steppe Eagle *A. nipalensis*.
- (5) Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* split to form two species: Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva* and American Golden Plover *P. dominica*.
- (6) Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* split to form three species: Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*, Armenian Gull *L. armenicus* and Herring Gull *L. argentatus*.
- (7) Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* split to form two species: Little Tern *S. albifrons* and Least Tern *S. antillarum*.
- (8) Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* split to form three species: Rock Pipit *A. petrosus*, Water Pipit *A. spinoletta* and Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens*.
- (9) Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* split to form two species: Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka* and Cyprus Pied Wheatear *O. cyprica*.
- (10) Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* split to form three species: Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*, Oriental Reed Warbler *A. orientalis* and Basra Reed Warbler *A. griseldis*.
- (11) Specific status given to Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae*, which has been regarded arbitrarily as a race of Goldcrest *R. regulus* or as a race of Firecrest *R. ignicapillus*.

Although marginal decisions, we considered that it would be premature to give specific status now to *Aquila heliaca adalberti*, *Saxicola torquata naava*, *Phylloscopus inornatus luonae* and *Pyrrhula pyrrhula murua*; or to deny specific status to Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma (leucorhoa) swinhonis* and Levaillant's Green Woodpecker *Picus (viridis) vaillantii*.

In these decisions, we have been guided by the current trends in the literature, and by the principle that recognition of such likely specific differences highlights the debate and attracts attention to areas of constructive study (see Voous, *Brit. Birds* 72: 573-578). We hope that fieldworkers as well as museum taxonomists will pay special attention to such pairs and groups of closely related species.



From the Rarities Committee's files

This new, regular feature will include the up-to-date identification information revealed by the Committee's investigations of submitted records; new identification criteria for separating closely similar species; and examples of the best documentation of rarities submitted to the Committee. This feature will, therefore, not only give the latest information on identification matters, and give guidance to today's observers on how rarities can be thoroughly documented, but will also provide an archive record of present-day standards. EDS

Isabelline Wheatear in Scilly The following description was submitted to the Rarities Committee on 27th October 1991. The record was accepted, and published in October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 537, plates 235 & 238).

SPECIES Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

LOCALITY St Agnes and Gugh, Isles of Scilly

DATES First date: 15th October 1991. Last date: still present when I left the islands on 26th October 1991.

OBSERVER A. R. Dean

OTHER OBSERVERS Paul Dukes, John Ridley, Ken Shaw, John Sirrett, and Roger Andrew were among the early observers and eventually everyone on the islands saw it (including Colin Bradshaw, Peter Clement, Steve Gantlett, Peter Lansdown and Keith Vinicombe).

PHOTOGRAPHS Photographs were taken at close range by many observers. One of Dave Cottridge's photos [was] enclosed.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT 10 × Zeiss binoculars & 30 × Kowa telescope.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF SPECIES Greece, Turkey, Israel, India, Soviet Central Asia. Also the 1990 St Mary's individual.

CIRCUMSTANCES At around 09.45 on 15th October 1991 I was birdwatching on Wingletang, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly. As I reached Beady Pool I immediately saw a wheatear *Oenanthe* standing on a boulder. Its generally pale appearance and upright stance at once suggested something interesting and luckily the wheatear proved approachable and co-operative. Close inspection revealed both plumage and structural characters matching only Isabelline Wheatear and I was able to confirm these features in direct comparison with a nearby Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe*. Mindful of the reputation of Isabelline Wheatear as a difficult species (and rumours about problems with the 1990 bird—though I know nothing about this!) I was keen to get other observers to view and identify the bird as objectively as possible. I rounded up John Ridley, Ken Shaw, Paul Dukes and others (several other potentially useful observers such as Peter Clement and Peter Lansdown had by this time gone over to St Mary's for the day) and told them of my view that the wheatear was an Isabelline but that they should identify it to their own satisfaction. Having studied the wheatear at equally close range, all were agreed on the identification.

The news was then put out to St Mary's but, just as the first boat-load of people appeared over the brow of Wingletang, the bird promptly flew off! Fortunately, it was relocated on Gugh, where it remained (with only one brief return to Beady Pool) until at least 26th October (when I left the islands).

Although this record must be dated from 15th October, it is possible that the bird had been present since 12th October. On that date, when walking across Gugh to see the Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola torquata maura/stejnegeri*, I glimpsed a pale wheatear, but, before I could get to grips with it, it was flushed by observers intent on the Stonechat. That was the end of the matter for me until the 15th. However, I mentioned the pale wheatear to several St Agnes observers and on 13th John Ridley and John Sirrett had equally brief and tantalising views of a pale wheatear on Wingletang (at this time the weather was extremely cold and blustery and birds did not stay in the open or in one place for longer than a few seconds!).

DESCRIPTION

GENERAL APPEARANCE A decidedly pale, bulky-bodied, relatively short-tailed wheatear with a strong-looking bill and a comparatively short wing-point. Paleness of upperparts was such that they contrasted relatively little with underparts but, in rear view, presented a very stark contrast with black tip of tail. Other plumage characters of particular note included bland face; supercilium tapering away behind eye; relatively thick black terminal band and short black 'stub' on tail; limited expanse of white on 'rump'; and pale silvery underwing.

SIZE & STRUCTURE Total length similar to a larger Northern Wheatear, but proportions different: body relatively bulbous with lower centre of gravity and a resultant somewhat pear-shaped outline, latter emphasised by shorter tail in comparison with Northern Wheatear and tendency to adopt upright stance. Generally five primary tips discernible beyond tertials: three closely spaced immediately beyond tertials, then a relatively wide gap before two more closely spaced tips at wing-point. Total length of exposed primaries equalled two-thirds to three-quarters length of tertials. (Northern Wheatear nearby displayed six primary tips, five of generally increasing separation, then a closely spaced longest primary (it thus lacked the obvious gap in the middle); the relatively long wing-point equalled or slightly exceeded the length of the tertials.) The tips of the primaries on Isabelline appeared rather more rounded than on Northern.

The bill was robust and deep-based and was about equal in length to or slightly exceeded the loreal distance. The legs looked sturdy but did not appear especially long in relation to body dimensions.

PLUMAGE Crown, nape, sides of neck, mantle, scapulars and greater coverts all pale sandy-grey with only slight brownish tinge ('isabelline'), greater coverts with paler tips forming a diffuse pale bar across folded wing. Just occasionally greater coverts revealed darker centres but almost invariably massive buff fringes overlapped darker areas and coalesced, combining with mantle and scapulars to produce continuous pale sandy expanse above tertials.

Tertials with dark blackish-brown centres and well-defined pale buff fringes. Alula black and median coverts centred with blackish-brown, these feather tracts thus contrasting markedly with pale surroundings; this especially true of very dark alula, but this not always displayed, being not infrequently hidden by overlapping coverts. Secondaries and primary coverts dark but with prominent pale fringes, the overall tone being pale-dominated (a more even balance on Northern). Primaries blackish-brown with paler tips.

Pale buffish-white supercilium running from forehead over eye, then tapering to a point above rear ear-coverts. Rear supercilium constant in emphasis,

but fore-supercilium varying from obvious in still, dry conditions to invisible in cool, damp weather. Loral bar blackish-brown flecked with buff, looking diffuse but nevertheless the darkest aspect of face. Ear-coverts sandy-buff, only very marginally darker than hindneck and sides of neck, and frequently difficult to differentiate therefrom except when slightly darker rear rim of ear-coverts caught the eye. A plain, bland expression resulted, with dark eye emphasised.

Throat off-white, below which upper breast suffused with pale but slightly peach-infused buff, forming a delicately warmer breastband; this colour extended narrowly along flanks before broadening again above legs. Remainder of underparts palest buff, with undertail-coverts whitish.

Folded tail appeared all black above and below, with extreme tip narrowly brownish-white. In flight, tail revealed a very broad black terminal band and a relatively short black central 'stub'. The resultant pattern was somewhat intermediate between Northern Wheatear and Desert Wheatear (even suggesting the latter's pattern momentarily in a brief flight view). Uppertail-coverts and lower rump white; sides of tail base white. In flight, area of white more restricted and far less eye-catching than on Northern Wheatear. In rear view, when wings drooped, the upper border of white generally fell in line with tip of second longest tertial or between tips of two longest tertials.

When flying high after insects, underwing revealed as silvery or very pale buffish-white.

BARE PARTS Iris, bill and legs all black.

BEHAVIOUR Generally more approachable than Northern Wheatear, and showing less awareness/concern at human presence (never seen to bob and scold like Northern). Often adopted rather upright posture, with head held up and tail pointing almost straight down, but this seemed more an inspection rather than alarm posture. Flew in long high loops after insects early in stay, but later fed almost exclusively on hairy caterpillars, which it carried to bare rocks and spent some minutes thrashing (presumably to remove hairs) before swallowing.

ALAN R. DEAN

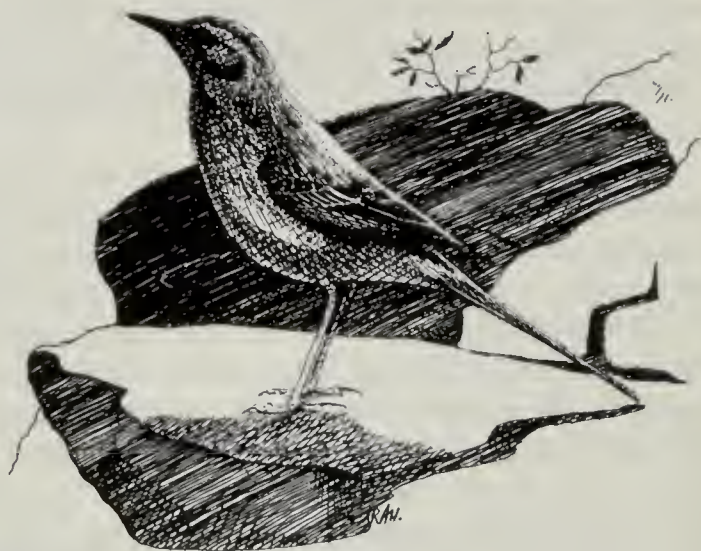
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Peter Lansdown (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) has commented as follows: 'Alan Dean's report on the Isabelline Wheatear in the Isles of Scilly in October 1991 has been selected as the first contribution in this series, to serve as an example of a high-quality rarity record submission to the BBRC. It appears virtually as it was received by the Committee, with only very minor editorial amendments.

'Records of such "difficult" species require particularly full and detailed documentation for acceptance and this was certainly supplied in this case. The report includes all of the items of information which are relevant to a long-staying bird that was not trapped and which are requested on the front of the BBRC Record Form. The description is comprehensive and covers general appearance, size and structure, plumage, bare parts and behaviour, and there is a paragraph on circumstances. Even though Alan Dean did not photograph the bird, he obtained a photograph and included it with his report. The report was submitted promptly, on the day following Alan's departure from the Isles of Scilly, and a copy was sent to the recorder for the islands.

'A discussion on age and/or sex would be relevant for many species, but not Isabelline Wheatear; records of short-stay birds should include notes on times and duration of observation, distance of observation and weather; and reports of dead birds and trapped individuals and sea-watching records each require further information from the observer. For Alan Dean's Isabelline Wheatear report, however, these do not apply, and the Rarities Committee considers that this is an ideal rarity record submission.' EDS

Field identification of Long-billed Pipit in the West Palearctic



William Laird and Adi Gencz

The Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* has an extensive, if somewhat discontinuous breeding distribution, through Africa, the Middle East, and from Iran to the Himalayas including India and Burma (Cramp 1988). Within this range, 17-20 subspecies have been described (e.g. Vaurie 1959). In the West Palearctic it is represented by the resident race *caplus*, which breeds in Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon; vagrants reported from Iraq and Kuwait possibly refer to the Iranian race *decaplus*, which is larger, a richer buff, and has a more streaked breast (S. C. Madge *in litt.*). This paper is restricted to the race *caplus* as it occurs in Israel, and comparisons are between that population and the West Palearctic forms of Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* and Richard's Pipit *A. novae-seelandiae*. Walsh & Wassink (1980, with appended editorial comment) briefly summarised the field identification of Long-billed Pipit of the race *caplus*, drawing attention to its grey appearance and comparatively indistinct plumage markings; the following adds considerably more detail to that summary.

In Israel, the Long-billed Pipit inhabits stony slopes or hillsides with rocky outcrops and grass vegetation thinly interspersed with bushes and low trees. It is clearly a large, heavy-bodied pipit strongly resembling Tawny, and often creating a deep-chested and a rather long, full-tailed impression. It is important to note that some Tawny Pipits occurring in Israel belong to larger and greyer populations than those typically encountered in Western Europe. Nevertheless, the plumage of Long-billed, especially the subdued head pattern, combined with voice and behaviour, facilitate its separation from both Tawny and Richard's Pipits.

Basic plumage description

In fresh adult plumage following the post-breeding moult (usually completed by the end of September), Long-billed Pipit has a dark grey-brown forehead and crown with creamy or sandy feather edges, appearing neatly and narrowly streaked; nape and hindneck are very slightly paler, with less prominent

dark feather centres. A long, narrow, cream-coloured supercilium fades onto the nape (where, on some individuals, pale flecking may be present). Fore part of supercilium may be more warmly washed buff when fresh. Upper 'cheeks' and ear-coverts are grey-buff or pale buff, streaked with dark brown. Dark brown loreal line. Typically, the moustachial stripe is poorly defined or even absent (some individuals have a dull grey-brown lower border to the ear-coverts); the dull buff or dull cream submoustachial area is poorly marked; and the dull grey-brown malar stripe is typically diffuse and poorly defined (but can be more pronounced).

Upperparts, from mantle to uppertail-coverts, are brown-grey, with slate-brown shaft-streaks and with diffuse creamy or sandy fringes; the lower scapulars are dull brown-grey, usually with the shafts poorly marked. The tail is quite long and often appears dark, but with paler sides.

The flight feathers are dull black with pale sandy outer edges, and the tertials dark brown diffusely fringed brown-sand, dull buff or tawny-buff. The lesser coverts are dull buff or buff-brown with dark centres; the median coverts are fringed dull buff, grey-buff or tawny-buff, their dark brown centres merging with these pale fringes (especially on inner webs) but typically extending in a long thin 'tooth' virtually to the tip; and the dark brown greater coverts are diffusely fringed dull buff, sandy-buff or tawny-buff. The alula and primary coverts are dull black with pale sandy fringes.

The underparts appear uniformly dull. The upper breast and breast-sides are diffusely streaked, the prominence of the streaking being variable (can appear very weak). The underwing-coverts are washed buff.

Seasonal and age-related differences

Breeding plumage is very similar to that of adult winter. With increasing wear, however, the upperparts become duller grey-brown and the underparts washed-out, and the breast streaking becomes slightly sharper (on many individuals often creating light brown 'tick-marks'). In spring, the greater coverts and often the tertials look moderately worn, and by late summer (July/August) adults are heavily worn, with most fringes lost and the underparts greyish-buff or brown-buff.

Juveniles are similar to fresh-plumaged adults, but with more contrasted plumage. They often have a strong buff wash on breast and flanks, with the belly off-white, and the streaking is heavier, darker and more clearly defined than on adults.

First-winter individuals resemble adults, but many retain some juvenile feathers above and (rarely) below. Some juvenile greater coverts may be retained (showing greater contrast between their centres and fringes), and in autumn many individuals have some retained juvenile tertials (fresh adult feathers have broader, more diffuse, buff or tawny-buff edges).

First-summer plumage is much as that of adult, but becomes duller and more heavily worn, and greater and median coverts and tertials become heavily abraded.

Field separation from Tawny Pipit

Long-billed Pipit appears much bulkier than Tawny, with stouter chest and

belly, slightly shorter legs, relatively smaller head with slightly longer and stouter bill, and a fuller, broader tail; it lacks the slim appearance of Tawny, which resembles a wagtail *Motacilla*. The main distinctions between the two species are summarised in table 1. Compared with Tawny Pipit, the general plumage pattern of Long-billed is rather uniform, subdued and lacking contrast. Its head pattern is poorly marked and rather bland, with a more open-faced or gentle expression in which the dark eye is fairly obvious; the dark, heavier bill can be prominent. The curving supercilium is narrow and usually quite long. The moustachial stripe is typically poorly defined or even absent (although some individuals have a dark lower border to ear-coverts), the sub-moustachial area is inconspicuous and lacks contrast, and the malar stripe is normally reduced, poorly defined and diffuse. By contrast, Tawny has a much better-marked and distinct head pattern, especially at close range: a thick, square supercilium bordered above by dark crown-sides; blackish lores and a dark eye-stripe; a thin but distinct moustachial stripe extending from base of bill to below eye (or sometimes running along lower border of ear-coverts), with a contrasting clean sandy or off-white submoustachial stripe; and usually a well-marked malar stripe (often prominent on juveniles).

Long-billed's upperparts are a flat grey-brown, lacking Tawny's sandy or buffy tones (especially on rump). On juveniles, the upperparts show more contrast, being dark grey-brown with paler cream or greyish-sandy fringes, though not approaching the scaly pattern on head and upperparts typical of juvenile Tawny. It is important to remember that some Tawny Pipits migrating through Israel are from greyer populations than those in Western Europe, *griseus* from west-central Asia being distinctly olive-grey above.

The underparts of Long-billed Pipit are more uniform and less clean than on Tawny. When fresh, they have a buff, grey-buff or tawny-buff ground colour (including on undertail-coverts), duller, deeper buff and less sandy than on Tawny; when worn, they become dull grey or buff-grey, with the breast a darker brown-grey. The ground colour of Tawny's underparts is a cleaner sandy or buff-sandy, with off-white belly and undertail-coverts (rarely, washed buff-sandy). On Long-billed, the chest and breast-side streaking is diffuse and dull grey-brown (recalling Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*), the streaks sometimes becoming slightly longer and better defined as the broad feather edges wear off to create thin, soft brown 'tick-marks'; the streaking is variable, and can be quite indistinct. Adult Tawny Pipit normally lacks streaking on its sandy breast, although it is not uncommon for individuals (especially females) to have sharp blackish spots or streaks which, when present, are bolder, darker and larger than on Long-billed and (importantly) are crisply defined; the sides of the upper breast may also show some, less distinct, streaking. Juvenile and many first-year Tawny Pipits are heavily marked below.

The wing-covert pattern of Long-billed is characteristically duller than that of Tawny. The median coverts look dark with buffy fringes, but exceptionally close views reveal a distinctive coloration and pattern: the dark brown centres are drawn into a long 'tooth' which virtually meets the feather tip, but they are not well demarcated, especially on the inner webs (where they gradually fade to the edges); and the fringes are buffish, grey-buff or brown-buff (when fresh, some washed warm orange-buff or tawny-buff, especially at sides), but

Table 1. Distinguishing features between Long-billed *Anthus similis* and Tawny Pipits*A. campestris*

See also figs. 1 & 2

Feature	Long-billed	Tawny
Shape	Heavy, with full breast and belly. Head relatively small for body size. Tail long and broad, appears rather 'full' when flushed. Wings distinctly broad in flight. Bill long and stout; legs relatively short for a large pipit	Sleek and often wagtail <i>Motacilla</i> -like, with long, narrow tail (held tightly closed when flushed). Wings not markedly broad. Bill slim and insignificant; legs long
Behaviour	Usually solitary or in pairs. Rises heavily when flushed, and often (not always) hovers briefly before alighting. Walks with horizontal carriage, although more upright when perched on boulders. Less energetic than Tawny, occasionally flicks and partially opens tail rather than typical wagging action of Tawny. Inhabits rocky and grassy hill and mountain slopes in well-vegetated country	Often solitary, but migrants often in small flocks of up to about 20. Rises suddenly and flies with strong undulations, dropping on to ground directly. Runs and walks energetically, wagging tail freely and nervously. Frequents dry, open country
Song	Given from ground or boulder, or in flight when rises quite high and flies on slow-flapping wings to another perch, generally without undulations. Perched song typically two far-carrying phrases interrupted by a pause, the first rising, the second falling: 'sweet-sweetoo'; in full song flight may be expanded to 3-4 notes with varying pauses between notes, but two-note rising and falling song most typical	Monotonously repeated, ringing 'cherlee' given in undulating, direct or semicircular song flight, ending with short parachute glide
Head pattern	Rather plain, with weak supercilium diffusing onto nape. Loral line dark; but less obvious than on Tawny. Moustachial stripe weak or absent; malar stripe usually weak or absent, but sometimes clear	Quite well marked, with distinct supercilium; notably dark loral line, malar and moustachial stripes
Upperparts	Grey-brown; darker on juveniles, which show weak pale scaling	Sandy or buffish grey-brown, on race <i>griseus</i> often almost olive-grey; juveniles with bold blackish feather centres
Underparts	Contrast little with upperparts, with buff ground colour extending to undertail-coverts, becoming distinctly greyish below when abraded. Breast streaking diffuse, becoming slightly mottled when worn	Contrast quite strongly with darker upperparts. Typically washed sandy below, becoming whiter on lower belly and undertail-coverts. Breast streaking, if present, clear and spotted, not diffuse. Juveniles heavily streaked below
Tail	Broad and full; very dark on underside when seen from below	Slim and narrow; not obviously dark on underside when seen from below

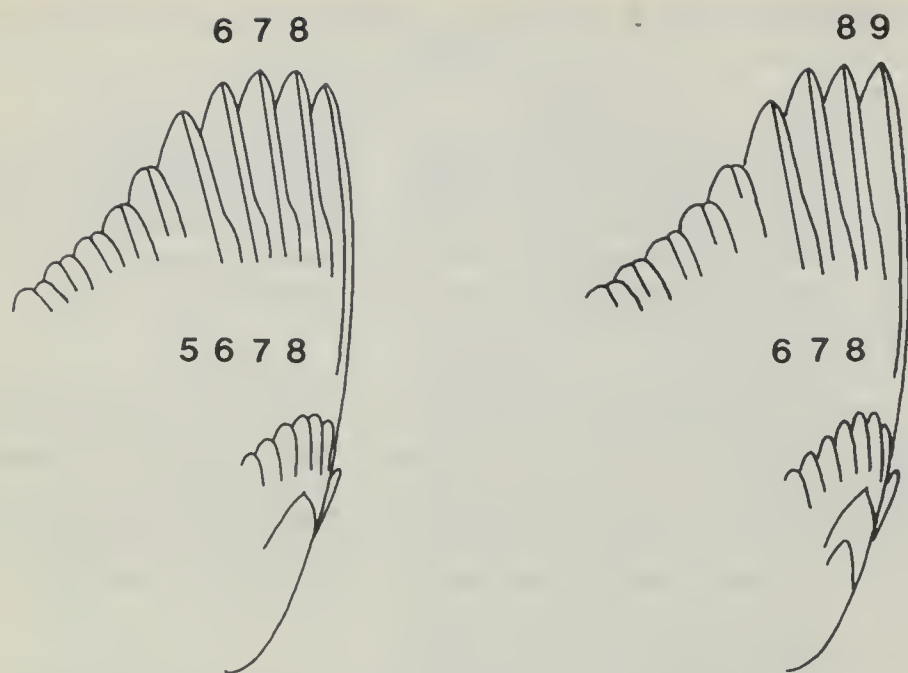


Fig. 1. Wing shapes of Long-billed *Anthus similis* (left) and Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*. Note more rounded wing shape of Long-billed (wing point formed by 6th, 7th and 8th primaries) compared with Tawny (wing point formed by 8th and 9th primaries). In the hand, emargination difference apparent (5th emarginated on Long-billed, in addition to 6th-8th)

can become quite bleached when worn. On Tawny Pipit, the median coverts have clean-cut blackish centres with contrasting creamy or sandy (sometimes quite buffish) fringes; rarely, the centres can be slightly drawn out towards the tip, but again are more crisply defined; juvenile median coverts have the centres extending down into a blunt point towards the tip, while adults possess broader rounded fringes. The greater coverts on Long-billed are pale buff, grey-buff or brown-buff with dark brown centres, duller than on Tawny and creating less of a light covert panel. Fresh-plumaged adult Long-billed has tertials with diffuse brown-buff or grey-buff edges; the juvenile tertials are extensively dark brown with thin buff or pale olive-cream fringes, lacking the pattern of juvenile Tawny (which recalls that of juvenile Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*).

Long-billed Pipit's tail is quite long and full and can appear slightly darker (in flight, often strikingly so: S. C. Madge *in litt.*) and less contrasted than Tawny's. At all ages, the central feathers, when fresh, are dark brown with narrow pale olive or grey-sandy edges (broader sandy fringes on Tawny, especially juvenile). The two outer pairs of rectrices have pale areas washed dull buff or brown-buff, often fading to off-white or cream-buff when worn (washed paler buff on Tawny, but colour can occasionally approach that of Long-billed). On perched individuals, tail pattern is normally, however, of little or no value in the field.

The bill of Long-billed Pipit is long, thick and typically extensively dark. It is longer than that of Tawny, with a drooped appearance created by the curved culmen. The bill creates the impression of thickness or heaviness distally, this being accentuated by the dark colour of the upper mandible extending almost to the basal cutting edges and by a blackish tip to the lower

mandible; the base of the lower mandible is flesh or orange-flesh, but on many dull flesh, grey-flesh or sometimes light grey. Tawny Pipit's bill is less prominent, generally appearing shorter, less heavy and not so dark.

Voice and behaviour

The song of Long-billed Pipit is rather simple, but distinctive. In its simplest form it consists of two notes (three syllables) suggesting a wolf-whistle. It is variously transcribed, but generally a 'sweei-sweeo' or 'tir-ee...tiu'. The first note consists of two rising syllables suggesting the call of Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, but louder, longer and slightly more disyllabic, and in tone not



1-3. Long-billed Pipits *Anthus similis*, Jerusalem, February 1986 (Adi Gencz). Above left, and left, classic individual, showing typical head pattern, long, deep bill, face pattern, degree of breast streaking; above right, adult with very plain face, no marked moustachial or malar stripes, relatively pale lores, long supercilium fading into nape, also note fresh tail feathers

dissimilar to some of the gentle calls of Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*; the second note starts off high, but drops in pitch to create a descending whistle (second half of wolf-whistle). Some individuals insert a further note in between which is similar to the second note (or occasionally to the first), but often more clearly disyllabic. There is some variation in the song and in the pauses between the notes.

Tawny Pipit's song consists of a repetition of two or three notes, with the last syllable stressed and rising in pitch: 'cherlee', 'chee-ree', 'chi-vee' or 'tsie-ru-flie'.

During the breeding season, Long-billed Pipit will monotonously deliver its song from dominant songposts or in flight. In song flight it shows a slightly unusual silhouette, created by the broadly rounded wings, the deep body, and the long, full tail, the latter almost blackish from below and contrasting with the otherwise pale plumage; the broad wing shape can suggest Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus*, but the long full tail (and also the habitat) makes such confusion highly unlikely.

Outside the breeding season, Long-billed gives a reasonably soft, flat and plaintive 'djeep', 'djup' or 'tyup' call. This call is remarkably constant: it is used as the flight call, and also on the ground when anxious or alarmed. The flight call of Tawny Pipit is the well-known disyllabic 'tsilip', 'tcheleep', 'chivlee' or 'teeuk'; sometimes it utters a 'tcheep' like a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (and almost recalling that of Richard's Pipit), and occasionally, when flushed or in large parties (10-20 individuals), it can give a very hard chirpy 'tchilp'.

Long-billed Pipit can sometimes be elusive outside the breeding season as it feeds quietly, walking with horizontal carriage, alone or in loose pairs. It is less energetic than Tawny, sometimes flicking and partially opening its tail rather than using the typical wagging action of Tawny. When alarmed, it does not perform the excited runs and nervous freezing behaviour associated with Tawny Pipit. When anxious, Long-billed assumes a slightly more horizontal stance than the upright posture of Tawny Pipit. See also table 1.

Field separation from Richard's Pipit

Richard's Pipit is a more elegant bird, with more erect carriage, longer legs, and a narrower and less blackish tail. It can be distinguished from Long-billed at all ages by its plumage pattern, loud explosive call and behaviour. Richard's shows pale lores (occasionally lightly marked with grey), pale ear-coverts, a broad pale area around the eye, a well-marked moustachial stripe, a clear submoustachial stripe, and a strong well-defined malar stripe. It also displays bold, heavy and well-defined streaks on chest and breast-sides, and its brownish 'cap' and upperparts are streaked dark. The outer tail feathers are extensively white.

Acknowledgments

We should like to express our gratitude to all those who have helped us in the preparation of this paper. Particular thanks are due to Merav Gellert for all her help and kindness. We should also like to thank Rami Mizrahi for his assistance and dedication, Yaron Bazar for his constructive and knowledgeable comments on our first draft, Zila Shariv of Tel Aviv University Museum, and



4 & 5. Long-billed Pipits *Anthus similis*: above, Jerusalem, November 1986 (*Adi Gencz*); below, Golan Heights, September 1988 (*Noah Salai*). Note characteristic pose; long, narrow, curving supercilium; diffuse moustachial stripe and malar stripe; buffish underparts; deep-chested appearance; long tail; long, stout bill; short legs compared with other large pipits





Fig. 2. Comparisons between Long-billed *Anthus similis* and Tawny Pipits *A. campestris*

THREE LEFT-HAND BIRDS Long-billed Pipits *A. similis*

Top, fresh adult after completing post-breeding moult (autumn/early winter). Note characteristic wing-covert pattern, subdued head pattern and diffuse breast streaking

Centre, worn plumage (spring/early summer), looking faded and washed-out

Bottom, first-winter (autumn: September/October), with more-contrasting wing-coverts and tertials retained

TWO RIGHT-HAND BIRDS Tawny Pipits *A. campestris*

Above, fresh adult after completing post-breeding moult (autumn/early winter), with more-contrasting head pattern and wing-coverts, and also some well-defined breast streaking

Below, first-winter (autumn), showing juvenile wing-coverts and some retained lower scapulars, well-marked 'face' pattern and heavy breast streaking





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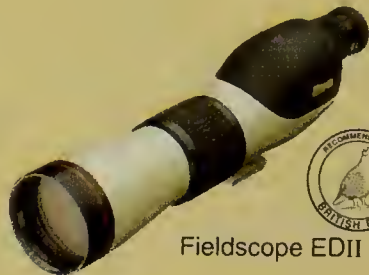
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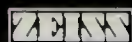
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Graham Cowles and Peter Colston of the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, who allowed us access to their collections. Thanks to David Yekutieli of the International Birdwatching Center Eilat and to Dafna Lavee of the Nature Reserves Authority of Israel. We also thank H. Kisbye and David Cottridge for the use of their photographs. Finally, our thanks to Dave Allen for his assistance, and to Steve Madge for his extensive comments on the final draft.

Summary

The Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* breeds in the West Palearctic, in Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, as the race *captus*. This race is similar to Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*, but can be distinguished by its duller, more uniform plumage with less marked head pattern, its voice, and differences in habitat choice and behaviour; its distinctive wing-covert pattern is also visible in very close views. Separation from Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae* is straightforward.

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Twenty-five years ago...

'From May to August 1967 an adult Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* stayed on the Bass Rock, East Lothian, where it consorted with the Gannets *Sula bassana* in this well-known colony in the Firth of Forth. It was first identified by Professor W. H. Thorpe on 18th May. He had just photographed a group of nesting Gannets and, on looking up from his camera, was astonished to find a Black-browed Albatross standing only ten yards away. Realising he had taken its photograph with the Gannets, he quickly took another before it flew off and disappeared. When the colour photographs were developed, he was relieved to find that he had not been suffering from hallucinations.' (*Brit. Birds* 61: 22, January 1968)

Also in January 1968, the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, which had moved west from Colchester (Essex) in October 1967 through Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset and Cornwall in November and December, finally arrived in the Isles of Scilly. At the other end of the country, the only British American Wigeons *Anas americana* of the year (a male and female) were found at Norwick, Unst, Shetland, on 20th January.



Behaviour notes

Northern Gannet and Common Guillemot nesting on Rockall On 19th June 1992, together with members of the crew from the yacht *Amtra*, I climbed to the summit of the 21-m-high rock, where there was the nest of a Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* with one egg, and an unbridled Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* closely attending its single egg.

I also noted approximately 2,600 birds on or around Rockall. Immature Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* were the most common, with 2,000 individuals present. The next most frequent species was Common Guillemot, of which there were about 500 (but only the one nest). The ratio of bridled to unbridled individuals was 1:1. There were also 50, mainly immature, Northern Gannets on the islet, and 20 Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* with a raft of Kittiwakes on the sea close by.

These are the first records of confirmed breeding on Rockall, though breeding by Common Guillemots has been suspected in the past.

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Dr W. R. P. Bourne has kindly provided the following summary of previous information. EDS

Birds breeding on Rockall Previous information was summarised, in his book *Rockall*, by James Fisher (1956), who concluded that 'Gannets sit on Rockall in most (but perhaps not all) summers, without making serious attempts to nest on it', but that 'the evidence that the Guillemot breeds on Rockall is as positive as indirect evidence can be'. Otherwise, despite a number of past claims, of which the most spectacular—reporting that most British seabirds, including the Little Auk *Alle alle*, were breeding—appeared anonymously in *Chambers' Journal* (n.s. 9: 161-163) in 1892, and was revealed in *The Times* for 5th March 1977 to have been concocted by A. T. Hay of Stockton-on-Tees for three guineas, most recent surveys have ignored Rockall, and there appears to be no previous proof that birds actually breed there.

There have subsequently been a number of other visits, notably by HMS *Hecla* on 25th March 1969 and RFA *Engadine* in June 1971, and one visitor camped there for a number of weeks. Most do not appear to have recorded much about the birds, except that Corporal Bill Grant of RAF Kinloss reported that there were 27 Northern Gannets on the rock and 322 Fulmars, two Great *Larus marinus* and seven Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*, 452 Kittiwakes, 116 Common Guillemots, at least three Razorbills *Alca torda* and a Puffin *Fratercula arctica* in the area when he visited Rockall with a BBC Nationwide television team in 1977 (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 24th June). During

3rd-8th July 1977, Brian Cunningham and three friends from Portrush also saw storm-petrels (*Hydrobatidae*) all the way out to Rockall and four Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* there, but, although when they swam ashore there were plenty of droppings on top, there was no evidence that any birds were actually breeding (B. Cunningham *in litt.*). Probably they are usually swept away by storms, and succeeded in 1992 only owing to the exceptionally fine spring.

W. R. P. BOURNE

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Use by birds of roads as navigational cues The note on Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* apparently using roads as navigational cues (*Brit. Birds* 82: 117) reminded me of similar behaviour by Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* in Morocco. Very often indeed, since 1982, I have seen flocks of Cattle Egrets, as they move to their roosts at dusk, flying just above main or secondary roads. Sometimes I have followed them by car for distances of about 10 km; in a few cases, they have flown so low that, when a vehicle arrived just in front of them, they had rapidly to avoid it, before beginning again to fly above the road.

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Grey Heron repeatedly catching fish-like object On 28th July 1989, at Seaforth, Merseyside, I watched a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* wading in 15 cm of water. The heron caught, in the usual stabbing manner, what appeared to be a fish, but, after examining it, realised that it was not a fish and dropped it back in the water. The 'fish' was in fact a sliver of wood. The heron instantly re-caught the object, repeated the examination procedure, dropped it back in the water, and again instantly re-caught it. It repeated these movements in an identical fashion 12-15 times. After this, it was noticeable that the period between dropping and re-catching was getting slightly longer. When it reached about five seconds, the 'prey' had drifted about 1.5 m away, but still the heron darted after and re-caught it. It seems either that the Grey Heron has instant 'lapses of memory' or that its intelligence cannot handle the reflex actions. After 15 minutes, the heron eventually allowed the wood to escape.

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that "The young of many, probably all, fish-eating birds will play with "fish-substitute" objects in this manner—I have seen it, for example, in juvenile Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster* on Ascension (one using, I well remember, the dried-out remains of a neighbouring nestling)." EDS

Oystercatchers rearing Northern Lapwing chick Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* regularly nest on the wader scrapes at Hickling NNR, Norfolk. In 1989, the first Oystercatcher returned on 18th April and was seen the following day with a mate. The same island as that used in 1988



6 & 7. Above, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* chick with its Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* 'parent'; and, below, Northern Lapwing chick (right) with 'sibling' Oystercatcher chick, Norfolk, June 1989 (Mary Arbon)



was chosen for the nest site, and egg-laying commenced around 5th May. On 13th May, FJR found one Oystercatcher egg lying about 10 cm away from the nest, which contained two more Oystercatcher eggs and a single egg of a Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*; fearing that the displaced egg would attract predators, FJR removed it from the area and left, to allow the birds to return. On 31st May, 18 days after the mixed clutch was first discovered, the eggs hatched and two Oystercatcher chicks were seen. Next day, a lapwing chick was seen close to one parent Oystercatcher that was brooding its two chicks; later that day there was a rain shower, and the lapwing chick was seen being brooded under one of the adult Oystercatchers. The lapwing quickly developed an independence, and regularly left its two 'siblings' near the parent and ventured down to the water's edge, where it probed the soft mud. On many occasions, the foraging parent returned from nearby arable fields with small worms and fed the two Oystercatcher chicks. The lapwing usually continued feeding alone, apparently not interested in accepting food from a parent. On 12th June, however, it was feeding in its normal way when one of the adult Oystercatchers approached with a worm in its bill and offered this to the lapwing chick, which took and ate the worm; this was observed only this one time, and the lapwing chick was never seen to approach a worm-carrying adult Oystercatcher.

The family was seen again on several later occasions, but by 21st June the Northern Lapwing chick was no longer with the Oystercatchers. It had

either succumbed to predation, or become independent and impossible to distinguish from the other similar-sized lapwing chicks present.

JOHN S. HAMPSHIRE and FRANCIS J. RUSSELL
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Derek Goodwin has commented: 'It is most interesting that the lapwing chick apparently did not (or not for some time) learn to recognise its foster parents as a source of food. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* ducklings are not fed or called to food by their natural mother, but when hatched and reared by a domestic hen *Gallus gallus* they learn, within a few hours of beginning to feed, to respond to the hen's food call and take the food she picks up and drops in front of them.' EDS

Grey Phalarope feeding in association with ducks On 1st October 1989, at Minsmere, Suffolk, we observed a Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* feeding very closely around a Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* which was standing in very shallow water and also feeding. The phalarope was obviously picking up from the water surface food items which had been disturbed by the Mallard's feet as it turned or by its bill action. During 30 minutes' observation, it fed within 5-30 cm of the Mallard, usually within 10-20 cm, spending more time around the flanks and rear; it occasionally flew to the margin of a neighbouring island, but always returned to the same Mallard. On one occasion, it performed the same feeding strategy around a Common Teal *A. crecca*. We saw it feeding in the same manner three hours later. Although commensalism has been noted for the Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus* (*BWP*, vol. 3, pp. 633-634), we can find no mention in the current literature of the Grey Phalarope using this feeding method.

DAVID KRAMER and JONATHAN C. PALMER
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Prey and prey-capture techniques of Herring Gull In 1984, at the Jersey Zoo, Jersey, Channel Islands, an immature Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* was observed preying on rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* (*Brit. Birds* 80: 730). In the summer of 1985, research was conducted on a captive flock of Emperor Geese *Anser canagicus* in an area where this same (ringed) gull and a mate formed a territory and began to build a nest. During the period of this study, the gull was seen on several occasions to take mammal prey: a large female brown rat *Rattus norvegicus* and two moles *Talpa europaea*, probably already dead, were carried to areas of rocks and battered repeatedly for up to 30 minutes, before being swallowed whole.

Flocks of adult and young Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were attracted to grain put out for the captive geese: the gull would join the starlings and stand motionless, before lunging forward and catching a young starling, and swiftly hitting it on the ground before swallowing it (this often happened so quickly that the birds nearby were not disturbed).

Juvenile House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* were twice seen being plucked from within a small bush by the gull, which swallowed them immediately.

Numerous duckling Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* were taken by the Herring

Gull: the gull flew quickly over the Mallard family, swooped down to pick up a duckling in its bill, and swallowed it in mid-air; the gull would return and, even if faced with an aggressive mother duck, it eventually took the whole brood (no Mallards succeeded in rearing young in the area that year).

A totally different technique was used in attempts to catch the Emperor goslings. The Herring Gull followed these on foot for periods of up to 15 minutes and would often run at them. The parent geese were easily capable of defending their offspring, but the pursuer was persistent and spent a total of several hours a day following different goose families. By seven days of age the goslings had grown significantly, and the gull lost interest. The Herring Gull was never successful in catching any Emperor goslings, which it always hunted on foot, never attempting an aerial attack. This patient and persistent pursuit on foot of Emperor goslings is very different from the spontaneous theft of other gulls' chicks in a Herring Gull colony or the opportunistic taking of other bird prey described above.

H. G. YOUNG

*The Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, Les Augrès Manor, Trinity,
Jersey JE3 5BF, Channel Islands*

Wryneck on passage roosting in reeds *BWP* (vol. 4) gives no details of roost sites used by the Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* on passage. In the evening of 8th September 1987, on Jersey, Channel Islands, we saw a Wryneck clinging to the top of a single reed in a thick reedbed. It was alert and watched intently as numerous Pied *Motacilla alba* and Yellow Wagtails *M. flava* began to occupy the stems around it; even larger numbers of Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* flew in and, chattering, joined the roost. The birds around the Wryneck bickered and changed position, without the Wryneck being disturbed, before they all settled and darkness fell. The following day, the Wryneck and all other birds had left the roost.

H. G. YOUNG, S. J. TONGE and D. WILSON

*The Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, Les Augrès Manor, Trinity,
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Grasshopper Warbler reeling in response to electric drill On 21st September 1989, at South Walney Nature Reserve, Cumbria, an electric drill was being used on masonry at the Walney lighthouse. Almost immediately after the drill had completed the first hole, a Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* began reeling, and continued in typical fashion for about one minute. The drill was used again, and, when it stopped, the warbler 'replied'. This sequence of events continued for 90 minutes, during which time the Grasshopper Warbler was located in a bramble bush *Rubus* some 40 m away from the activity.

TIM DEAN

*Coastguard Cottages, South Walney Nature Reserve, Walney Island, Barrow-in-Furness,
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Nest-site fidelity of Eurasian Treecreeper In the spring of 1958, at West Chilington, West Sussex, I found a pair of Eurasian Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* nesting behind a sheet of corrugated iron loosely attached to the side of a garden shed. While artificial nest sites of this kind are not unusual for this

species, it is interesting that this particular site has also been used annually for the subsequent 33 years.

F. W. DOUGHARTY

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Eurasian Jay carrying live toad On 10th June 1989, in mixed woodland at Sutton Heath, Suffolk, we saw a Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* with a large object in its bill fly across the path in front of us. Its flight was laboured, as though carrying a heavy weight. The Jay landed on the branch of a Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* 10 m from us. On checking with binoculars, we were surprised to discover that it was carrying a large, live common toad *Bufo bufo*; we estimated the toad to be about 15 cm long, slightly less than half the length of the Jay, indicating that it was probably a female. The Jay readjusted the position of the toad in its bill, and flew off. We were unable to ascertain whether it ate the toad. We can find no record of toads in the diet of the Eurasian Jay.

JUDITH ENTWISLE-BAKER and STUART ENTWISLE-BAKER

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Prolonged fighting between Common Starlings On 1st March 1989, at Leuchars, Fife, I watched two Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, which I thought to be young males, fighting on short grass. The encounter continued for at least 30 minutes, with only brief rests during which the birds remained locked together. The fighting included long periods of tumbling over, and neither individual appeared to be dominant. The aggression was fierce, with claws locked onto neck and bill, and with frequent bill-stabbing. The starlings seemed equally adept at avoiding damaging blows. At one stage, they rolled under barbed wire, and for a few seconds one was astride a wire strand while attacking the other beneath. On several occasions, the fighting on the ground was interspersed with 'fly-ups' (see Feare, 1984, *The Starling*), during which the combatants rose vertically into the air while continuing to fight. Eventually, they separated and flew away rapidly in different directions. During the long encounter, another male approached several times, but each time it flew off without further action. No other starlings were seen in the vicinity. As the observation was made through double-glazed windows, no vocalisations were heard. The initiation of the fight was not observed, but it was assumed that the dispute was territorial, the weather at the time being mild with no shortage of food. I have not previously seen such a prolonged aggressive encounter, and Feare (1984) gave no indication of the duration of such fights.

NORMAN ELKINS

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Woodchat Shrikes flocking in Portugal On 31st August 1986, at Santa Cita, Portugal, I witnessed a flock of some 50 Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator*, including both adults and juveniles, as they wheeled from one cork oak *Quercus suber* to the next, chattering noisily.

NICHOLAS MOORE

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This species is not normally gregarious, even on migration. Assuming that some predator was not being mobbed, this 'excited', noisy behaviour may have been in response to an unusual concentration of some invertebrate prey within or above the cork oaks. We welcome details of any comparable observations. EDS



Letter

An unacceptable Norfolk record of Baird's Sandpiper Preliminary work on a new *Birds of Norfolk* volume has attracted attention to the considerable suspicion over the first county specimen of a Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, supposedly obtained at Hunstanton on 16th September 1903. Details are contained in Dr B. B. Riviere's *History of the Birds of Norfolk* (1903). The bird was 'received by Mr G. Bristowe [sic], the taxidermist at St. Leonards, on 19th September, where it was examined in the flesh by M. J. Nicoll, and afterwards passed into the collection of Sir Vauncy Crewe. The sex of this bird was not determined and its occurrence remained unrecorded until 1909 (Gurney, *Zoologist*, 1909, p. 124. Witherby, *British Birds*, vol. iii, p. 29).'

The fascinating articles exposing the 'Hastings Rarities', which had completely misled the leaders of British ornithology for a considerable period, occupied the whole of a much-enlarged August 1962 issue of *British Birds* (55: 281-384). Following a highly detailed investigation over several years, 'it appears plain that the records cannot properly stand.'

It was to Bristow that the Hastings Rarities were brought and by him that they were usually first shown to various local ornithologists. So far as Sir Vauncy Harpur Crewe is concerned, the *Catalogue of Cases of Birds in the Dyke Road Museum, Brighton* (1927) notes that 'he spared no expense in acquiring varieties and rare species for his collection, but unfortunately took much less care in testing the genuineness as British of the rarities offered to him; and the high prices he was prepared to pay without close investigation offered a great temptation to dealers, so that many of the birds he obtained as British-killed are of very doubtful authenticity.'

In these circumstances, the Hunstanton Baird's Sandpiper has been deleted from the Norfolk archives.

MICHAEL J. SEAGO

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The authors of the main 'Hastings Rarities' paper, E. M. Nicholson and I. J. Ferguson-Les, have been consulted concerning the deletion of this record from the national archive, and they concur with the decision taken by Michael J. Seago, which is also endorsed by us.

It is probable that there are still a few (or perhaps many) other similar dubious rarity records included on county lists and therefore remaining as accepted British records. We should like to encourage the investigation and reporting to us of any such cases, so that the the pre-Rarities-Committee totals and record patterns can be corrected. EDS



Reviews

Of Birds and Men. By Herbert Axell. The Book Guild, Lewes, Sussex, 1992. 284 pages; 45 black-and-white plates. £14.95.

I knew that I would enjoy reading this book before I had even opened the first page. I was one of countless young birdwatchers in the 1950s who came under the spell and teaching of Bert (I never did call him Herbert!). Here is a veritable orgy of personal reminiscences, including name-dropping on a great and glorious scale. Everybody who is anybody gets a mention – although in truth there are a few missing – to the extent that there are nearly five pages of index for the ‘Men’ and only just over four for the ‘Birds’.

As I keenly devoured page after page, I was left with the feeling that this could well be the last autobiography of such style – the end of an era? If you have an interest in Dungeness, Malta, the RSPB, migration, travelling through the world, Minsmere, rarities, land management or virtually any other birdy subject, there is something here for you.

Criticism? Yes, of course. One cannot help wishing that this book had been published a few years earlier; and the quality of the photographic reproduction is very poor. My advice: read it – you’ll enjoy it.

BOB SCOTT

Birds of Europe: with North Africa and the Middle East. By Lars Jonsson. Translated by David Christie. Christopher Helm (Publishers), London, 1992. 559 pages; over 400 colour illustrations; 498 distribution maps. £25.00.

It was in 1978 that the British birding public first became aware of Lars Jonsson. In that year, Penguin Books published his *Birds of Wood, Park and Garden*, *Birds of Sea and Coast* and *Birds of Lake, Rivers, Marsh and Field*, and his *Birds of Mountain Regions* followed in 1979. The fifth and final book in the series, *Birds of the Mediterranean and Alps*, was published in 1982 by Croom Helm.

The reviews in *British Birds* (71: 595-596; 72: 496; 73: 600; 76: 154) discussed briefly the merits and demerits of the texts and distribution maps and criticised the grouping of species into habitats and regions rather than their placing in systematic sequence. Quite correctly, however, the reviews concentrated on describing with great enthusiasm the quality of the abundant paintings, the like of which had not been seen before.

Now, a decade after the appearance in Britain of the last of these books, the set has been combined and published as a single volume. Rearrangement of the species into systematic order has removed the earlier major criticism, and the texts, distribution maps and colour illustrations have been greatly revised.

The texts have retained their original freedom from a rigid format, so, as the paintings convey the general appearance of each species and subspecies, the texts can concentrate on whatever the author considers is important for each, to the exclusion of the obvious and the irrelevant. For instance, the familiar Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* has 11 lines of text with information on, in descending order of quantity, voice, jizz, habitat, status in Britain, behaviour, diet, identification and size, whilst the problematic Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* has 16 lines of text, all but one covering its appearance and its separation from Common Gull *L. canus*. Bird identification has advanced considerably during the last decade or so and reference to a number of recent papers in *British Birds* and other European journals confirms that Lars Jonsson has reflected in his updated texts, as well as in his paintings, those new characters which have been established in this period.

The distribution maps, which cover the region, are very detailed and up-to-date, as they are based upon the recent census and atlas projects carried out in many countries.

The paintings, as a near-complete Western Palearctic set, are splendid, and few potential purchasers will look beyond these before deciding to buy the book. Even those who possess the five

earlier volumes, perhaps *especially* those fortunate ones, will wish to purchase it. Nearly a third of the full-page colour plates are new, and others have been revised for both content and detail. Also, numerous additional portraits have been included on the pages which otherwise contain the texts and the distribution maps. To most birders, the name of Lars Jonsson conjures up visions of superb bird paintings, in which each species is portrayed in lifelike, distinctive stance with its character instantly recognisable and with the shape and plumage reflecting great attention to detail by the artist. Those of us with such high expectations will not be disappointed; indeed, more than a few of the colour illustrations are quite outstanding. Where else, in a single volume, can one drool over paintings of such geographically peripheral species as American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* from the west, White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* from the east and White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* from the south, as well as immerse oneself in in-depth treatment of divers (Gaviidae), stints and peeps (Calidridinae) and skuas (Stercorariidae)?

The book has so much to offer the reader and the browser that it would be churlish to dwell on the one or two places where it could have been improved. If you are at all interested in identification, or if you enjoy bird illustrations at their best, you simply must treat yourself to a copy.

PETER LANSDOWN

Bird Migration. By Robert Burton.

(Aurum, London, 1992. 160 pages. £16.95) There are many books on bird migration, catering for all levels of knowledge and interest. This new, lavishly illustrated book is not one of the academic treatises. It is, however, as a non-technical introduction to this complex subject, undoubtedly better than most. The text is highly readable, comprehensive in scope and, most importantly, authoritative. The case studies used are, on the author's own admission, totally biased towards the European and North American perspective. The illustrations comprise many stunning colour photographs, not all perhaps directly relevant to the subject, but nevertheless a joy to look at. A few maps and diagrams are also included where appropriate, and these are clear and visually pleasing. It would be hard to find a better introduction to this fascinating subject and many birders (or indeed anyone who has ever marvelled at the spectacular migrations of birds) would enjoy this book. NIGEL REDMAN

Lommar. By Lars Jonsson & Toralf Tysse. Illustrated by Lars Jonsson.

(*Vår Fågelvärld*, supplement no. 15, Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening, Stockholm, 1992. 80 pages. Paperback SKr 100) The first fully illustrated in-depth treatment of the four West Palearctic divers *Gavia*. Covers distribution, behaviour, and so on, but concentrates on field identification and ageing. The text, perfectly complemented by over 40 superb colour paintings and plates, goes into exceptional detail on all plumages from juvenile to adult, adding much new information (e.g. description of second-summer plumage of White-billed Diver *G. adamsii*: entirely sooty-grey head and neck). Sections on moult and plumage development of the two largest species, and on flight identification of all four, extend far beyond previously

published work. An extremely useful quick reference key and guide lists 22 features to look for on winter-plumaged and non-adult divers. An amazing publication, but all the text and captions are in Swedish, so the information is unavailable to most potential readers. DAC

Mallards. By Scott Nielsen.

(Swan Hill Press, Shrewsbury, 1992. 144 pages. £19.95) This is a pictorial celebration of the world's most numerous and most successful duck. I doubt if this most familiar of birds has ever been photographed in such detail or as well. Pictures of Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* in close up, in flight, in every plumage, and in every attitude abound on every page. The book was originally published in Canada and, although no concessions of spelling or text content have been made for a British readership, this becomes of little consequence in comparison with the photographs, which need no translation to cross the Atlantic. For once, the blurb does not exaggerate in describing this as 'a beautiful pictorial essay'. MAO

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1993. Edited by John Pemberton.

(Buckingham Press, Maids Moreton, 1992. 320 pages. Paperback £11.00) This is the thirteenth *Yearbook*, as invaluable as a source of reference as were the earlier volumes. As well as the regular features, there are also eight articles, including 'Saving the World's birds: the work of the International Council for Bird Preservation' by Georgina Green and 'The rarity and scarce migrant database of Britain and Ireland' by the BBRC's Statistician, Pete Fraser. These *Yearbooks* are not only worth buying for use during the coming year, but are also worth keeping on one's library shelves as an historical record. JIRS



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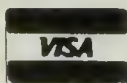
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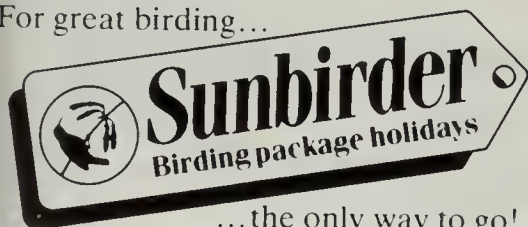
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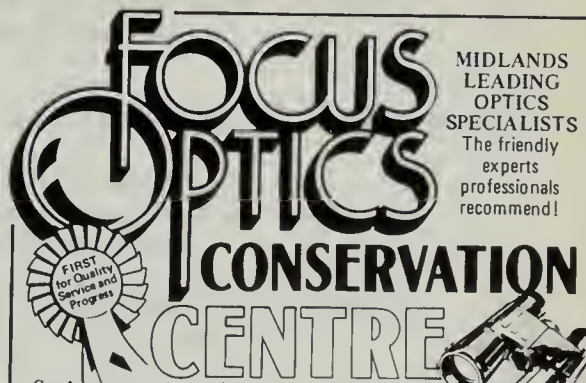
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The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds

Scientific name	Formal English name	Scientific name	Formal English name
STRUTHIONIDAE		PHALACROCORACIDAE	
<i>Struthio camelus</i>	Ostrich	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant
GAVIIDAE		<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	Double-crested Cormorant
<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Red-throated Diver	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Shag
<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Black-throated Diver	<i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	Socotra Cormorant
<i>Gavia immer</i>	Great Northern Diver	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>	Pygmy Cormorant
<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	White-billed Diver	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	Long-tailed Cormorant
PODICIPEDIDAE		ANHINGIDAE	
<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Darter
<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Little Grebe	PELECANIDAE	
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	White Pelican
<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	Dalmatian Pelican
<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	Pink-backed Pelican
<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Black-necked Grebe	FREGATIDAE	
DIOMEDEIDAE		<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	Magnificent Frigatebird
<i>Diomedea melanophrys</i>	Black-browed Albatross	ARDEIDAE	
<i>Diomedea chlororhynchos</i>	Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Great Bittern
<i>Diomedea cauta</i>	Shy Albatross	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	American Bittern
<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	Wandering Albatross	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	Least Bittern
PROCELLARIIDAE		<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Little Bittern
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Fulmar	<i>Ixobrychus eurhythmus</i>	Schrenck's Little Bittern
<i>Daption capense</i>	Cape Petrel	<i>Ardeirallus sturmii</i>	Dwarf Bittern
<i>Pterodroma madeira</i>	Madeira Petrel	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Night Heron
<i>Pterodroma feae</i>	Cape Verde Petrel	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	Striated Heron
<i>Pterodroma mollis</i>	Soft-plumaged Petrel	<i>Butorides virescens</i>	Green Heron
<i>Pterodroma hasitata</i>	Capped Petrel	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Squacco Heron
<i>Pterodroma incerta</i>	Atlantic Petrel	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Indian Pond Heron
<i>Bulweria bulwerii</i>	Bulwer's Petrel	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	Chinese Pond Heron
<i>Bulweria fallax</i>	Jouanin's Petrel	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Cattle Egret
<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Cory's Shearwater	<i>Hydranassa caerulea</i>	Little Blue Heron
<i>Calonectris leucomelas</i>	Streaked Shearwater	<i>Hydranassa tricolor</i>	Tricolored Heron
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	Pale-footed Shearwater	<i>Hydranassa ardesiaca</i>	Black Heron
<i>Puffinus gravis</i>	Great Shearwater	<i>Egretta thula</i>	Snowy Egret
<i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	Wedge-tailed Shearwater	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	Western Reef Egret
<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Little Egret
<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	Manx Shearwater	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	Intermediate Egret
<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	Mediterranean Shearwater	<i>Egretta alba</i>	Great White Egret
<i>Puffinus lherminieri</i>	Audubon's Shearwater	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Grey Heron
<i>Puffinus assimilis</i>	Little Shearwater	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Great Blue Heron
HYDROBATIDAE		<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron
<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Wilson's Storm-petrel	<i>Ardea goliath</i>	Goliath Heron
<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	White-faced Storm-petrel	CICONIIDAE	
<i>Fregetta grallaria</i>	White-bellied Storm-petrel	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>	Yellow-billed Stork
<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	European Storm-petrel	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Black Stork
<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	Leach's Storm-petrel	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	White Stork
<i>Oceanodroma monorhis</i>	Swinhoe's Storm-petrel	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>	Marabou Stork
<i>Oceanodroma castro</i>	Madeiran Storm-petrel	THRESKIORNITHIDAE	
PHAETHONTIDAE		<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Glossy Ibis
<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>	Bald Ibis
SULIDAE		<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	Sacred Ibis
<i>Sula sula</i>	Red-footed Booby	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Eurasian Spoonbill
<i>Sula dactylatra</i>	Masked Booby	<i>Platalea alba</i>	African Spoonbill
<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Brown Booby	PHOENICOPTERIDAE	
<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Northern Gannet	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Greater Flamingo
<i>Morus capensis</i>	Cape Gannet	<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>	Lesser Flamingo

This list has been compiled for reference concerning English and scientific names; inclusion of a species does not necessarily imply formal acceptance on the Western Palearctic List.

Scientific name	Formal English name
ANATIDAE	
<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	Fulvous Whistling Duck
<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	White-faced Whistling Duck
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Mute Swan
<i>Cygnus atratus</i>	Black Swan
<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	Tundra Swan
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Whooper Swan
<i>Anser fabalis</i>	Bean Goose
<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Pink-footed Goose
<i>Anser albifrons</i>	White-fronted Goose
<i>Anser erythropus</i>	Lesser White-fronted Goose
<i>Anser anser</i>	Greylag Goose
<i>Anser indicus</i>	Bar-headed Goose
<i>Anser caerulescens</i>	Snow Goose
<i>Anser rossii</i>	Ross's Goose
<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Canada Goose
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Barnacle Goose
<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Brent Goose
<i>Branta ruficollis</i>	Red-breasted Goose
<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	Egyptian Goose
<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Ruddy Shelduck
<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Common Shelduck
<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>	Spur-winged Goose
<i>Nettion coromandelianus</i>	Cotton Pygmy-goose
<i>Aix sponsa</i>	Wood Duck
<i>Aix galericulata</i>	Mandarin Duck
<i>Anas penelope</i>	Eurasian Wigeon
<i>Anas americana</i>	American Wigeon
<i>Anas falcata</i>	Falcated Duck
<i>Anas strepera</i>	Gadwall
<i>Anas formosa</i>	Baikal Teal
<i>Anas crecca</i>	Common Teal
<i>Anas capensis</i>	Cape Teal
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard
<i>Anas rubripes</i>	American Black Duck
<i>Anas acuta</i>	Northern Pintail
<i>Anas erythrorhynchos</i>	Red-billed Duck
<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Garganey
<i>Anas discors</i>	Blue-winged Teal
<i>Anas sula</i>	Cape Shoveler
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Northern Shoveler
<i>Mareca angustirostris</i>	Marbled Duck
<i>Nettion rufina</i>	Red-crested Pochard
<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Common Pochard
<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	Canvasback
<i>Aythya collaris</i>	Ring-necked Duck
<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Ferruginous Duck
<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Tufted Duck
<i>Aythya marila</i>	Greater Scaup
<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Lesser Scaup
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Common Eider
<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	King Eider
<i>Somateria fischeri</i>	Spectacled Eider
<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>	Steller's Eider
<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	Harlequin Duck
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Long-tailed Duck
<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Common Scoter
<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	Surf Scoter
<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Velvet Scoter
<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Bufflehead
<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	Barrow's Goldeneye
<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Common Goldeneye
<i>Mergus cucullatus</i>	Hooded Merganser
<i>Mergus albellus</i>	Smew
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Red-breasted Merganser
<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Goosander

Scientific name	Formal English name
<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	Ruddy Duck
<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	White-headed Duck
ACCIPITRIDAE	
<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	Honey-buzzard
<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	Black-shouldered Kite
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Black Kite
<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Red Kite
<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	African Fish Eagle
<i>Haliaeetus leucorhynchus</i>	Pallas's Fish Eagle
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	White-tailed Eagle
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle
<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	Lammergeier
<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Egyptian Vulture
<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Hooded Vulture
<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Griffon Vulture
<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>	Rüppell's Griffon Vulture
<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>	Lappet-faced Vulture
<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Monk Vulture
<i>Circus gallicus</i>	Short-toed Eagle
<i>Terathopus ecaudatus</i>	Bateleur
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Marsh Harrier
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Hen Harrier
<i>Circus macrourus</i>	Pallid Harrier
<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Montagu's Harrier
<i>Melierax metabates</i>	Dark Chanting-goshawk
<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	Gabar Goshawk
<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Northern Goshawk
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Eurasian Sparrowhawk
<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Shikra
<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>	Levant Sparrowhawk
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Swainson's Buzzard
<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Common Buzzard
<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	Long-legged Buzzard
<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Rough-legged Buzzard
<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	Lesser Spotted Eagle
<i>Aquila clanga</i>	Spotted Eagle
<i>Aquila rapax</i>	Tawny Eagle
<i>Aquila aipalensis</i>	Steppe Eagle
<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	Imperial Eagle
<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Golden Eagle
<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>	Verreaux's Eagle
<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	Booted Eagle
<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>	Bonelli's Eagle
PANDIONIDAE	
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Osprey
FALCONIDAE	
<i>Falco naumanni</i>	Lesser Kestrel
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Kestrel
<i>Falco sparverius</i>	American Kestrel
<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	Red-footed Falcon
<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Merlin
<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Hobby
<i>Falco eleonorae</i>	Eleonora's Falcon
<i>Falco concolor</i>	Sooty Falcon
<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	Lanner Falcon
<i>Falco cherrug</i>	Saker Falcon
<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	Gyr Falcon
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon
<i>Falco peregrinoides</i>	Barbary Falcon
TETRAONIDAE	
<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>	Hazel Grouse
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Willow Grouse/Red Grouse
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Ptarmigan

Scientific name	Formal English name	Scientific name	Formal English name
<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	Black Grouse	HAEMATOPODIDAE	
<i>Tetrao milosiewiczi</i>	Caucasian Black Grouse	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Oystercatcher
<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	Capercaillie	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>	African Black Oystercatcher
PHASIANIDAE		RECURVIROSTRIDAE	
<i>Callipepla californica</i>	California Quail	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Black-winged Stilt
<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	Northern Bobwhite	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Avocet
<i>Tetrao gallus caucasicus</i>	Caucasian Snowcock	DROMADIDAE	
<i>Tetrao gallus caspius</i>	Caspian Snowcock	<i>Dromas ardeola</i>	Crab-plover
<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	Chukar Partridge	BURHINIDAE	
<i>Alectoris graeca</i>	Rock Partridge	<i>Burhinus oedicaemus</i>	Stone-curlew
<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	Senegal Thick-knee
<i>Alectoris barbara</i>	Barbary Partridge	GLAREOLIDAE	
<i>Ammoperdix griseogularis</i>	See-see Partridge	<i>Pluvianus aegyptius</i>	Egyptian Courser
<i>Ammoperdix heyi</i>	Sand Partridge	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	Cream-coloured Courser
<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Black Francolin	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	Collared Pratincole
<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>	Double-spurred Francolin	<i>Glareola maldivarum</i>	Oriental Pratincole
<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Grey Partridge	<i>Glareola nordmaani</i>	Black-winged Pratincole
<i>Perdix dauuricae</i>	Daurian Partridge	CHARADRIIDAE	
<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Common Quail	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Little Ringed Plover
<i>Syrnaticus reevesii</i>	Reeves's Pheasant	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Great Ringed Plover
<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Common Pheasant	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	Semipalmated Plover
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<i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>	Lady Amherst's Pheasant	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>	Kittlitz's Plover
NUMIDIDAE		<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Kentish Plover
<i>NNumida meleagris</i>	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Charadrius naongolus</i>	Lesser Sand Plover
MELEAGRIDIDAE		<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	Greater Sand Plover
<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Wild Turkey	<i>Charadrius asiaticus</i>	Caspian Plover
TURNICIDAE		<i>Charadrius dominellus</i>	Dotterel
<i>Turnix sylvatica</i>	Small Button-quail	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Pacific Golden Plover
RALLIDAE		<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	American Golden Plover
<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Water Rail	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	European Golden Plover
<i>Porzana porzana</i>	Spotted Crake	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Grey Plover
<i>Porzana carolina</i>	Sora Crake	<i>Hoplopterus spinosus</i>	Spur-winged Lapwing
<i>Porzana parva</i>	Little Crake	<i>Hoplopterus tectus</i>	Black-headed Lapwing
<i>Porzana pusilla</i>	Baillon's Crake	<i>Hoplopterus iadicus</i>	Red-wattled Lapwing
<i>Porzana marginalis</i>	Striped Crake	<i>Chettusia gregaria</i>	Sociable Lapwing
<i>Limnecorax flavirostris</i>	Black Crake	<i>Chettusia leucura</i>	White-tailed Lapwing
<i>Crex crex</i>	Corn Crake	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Northern Lapwing
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Moorhen	SCOLOPACIDAE	
<i>Porphyrio alleni</i>	Allen's Gallinule	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Great Knot
<i>Porphyrio martinica</i>	American Purple Gallinule	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Red Knot
<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Purple Swamp-hen	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Sanderling
<i>Fulica atra</i>	Common Coot	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	Semipalmated Sandpiper
<i>Fulica americana</i>	American Coot	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	Western Sandpiper
<i>Fulica cristata</i>	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	Red-necked Stint
GRUIDAE		<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Little Stint
<i>Grus grus</i>	Common Crane	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Temminck's Stint
<i>Grus monacha</i>	Hooded Crane	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>	Long-toed Stint
<i>Grus caucasicus</i>	Sandhill Crane	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	Least Sandpiper
<i>Grus leucogeranus</i>	Siberian White Crane	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>	White-rumped Sandpiper
<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	Demoiselle Crane	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	Baird's Sandpiper
OTIDIDAE		<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	Pectoral Sandpiper
<i>Ottrax tetrax</i>	Little Bustard	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
<i>Neotis denhami</i>	Denham's Bustard	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Curlew Sandpiper
<i>Neotis nuba</i>	Nubian Bustard	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Purple Sandpiper
<i>Othmyotis undulata</i>	Houbara Bustard	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Dunlin
<i>Oreotis arabs</i>	Arabian Bustard	<i>Eurymorhynchus pygmaeus</i>	Spoonbill Sandpiper
<i>Otis tarda</i>	Great Bustard	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	Broad-billed Sandpiper
OSTRATULIDAE		<i>Micropalaea himantopus</i>	Stilt Sandpiper
<i>Ostratula benghalensis</i>	Painted-snipe	<i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>	Buff-breasted Sandpiper
		<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Ruff
		<i>Lymaocryptes minimus</i>	Jack Snipe

Scientific name	Formal English name
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Common Snipe
<i>Gallinago media</i>	Great Snipe
<i>Gallinago stenura</i>	Pintail Snipe
<i>Gallinago megala</i>	Swinhoe's Snipe
<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	Short-billed Dowitcher
<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	Long-billed Dowitcher
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Woodcock
<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Black-tailed Godwit
<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	Hudsonian Godwit
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit
<i>Numenius minutus</i>	Little Curlew
<i>Numenius borealis</i>	Eskimo Curlew
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel
<i>Numenius tenuirostris</i>	Slender-billed Curlew
<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Eurasian Curlew
<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Upland Sandpiper
<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Spotted Redshank
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Common Redshank
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Marsh Sandpiper
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Common Greenshank
<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	Greater Yellowlegs
<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Lesser Yellowlegs
<i>Tringa solitaria</i>	Solitary Sandpiper
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Green Sandpiper
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Wood Sandpiper
<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	Terek Sandpiper
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper
<i>Actitis macularia</i>	Spotted Sandpiper
<i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>	Grey-tailed Tattler
<i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>	Willet
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Turnstone
<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	Wilson's Phalarope
<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Red-necked Phalarope
<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	Grey Phalarope
STERCORARIIDAE	
<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Pomarine Skua
<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Arctic Skua
<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Long-tailed Skua
<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Great Skua
<i>Stercorarius maccormicki</i>	South Polar Skua
LARIDAE	
<i>Larus hemprichii</i>	Sooty Gull
<i>Larus leucophthalmus</i>	White-eyed Gull
<i>Larus ichthyæus</i>	Great Black-headed Gull
<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	Mediterranean Gull
<i>Larus atricilla</i>	Laughing Gull
<i>Larus pipixcan</i>	Franklin's Gull
<i>Larus minutus</i>	Little Gull
<i>Larus sabini</i>	Sabine's Gull
<i>Larus philadelphia</i>	Bonaparte's Gull
<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Black-headed Gull
<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>	Brown-headed Gull
<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>	Grey-headed Gull
<i>Larus græi</i>	Slender-billed Gull
<i>Larus audouinii</i>	Audouin's Gull
<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Ring-billed Gull
<i>Larus canus</i>	Common Gull
<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Lesser Black-backed Gull
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Herring Gull
<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Yellow-legged Gull
<i>Larus armenicus</i>	Armenian Gull
<i>Larus glaucooides</i>	Iceland Gull
<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Glaucous Gull
<i>Larus marinus</i>	Great Black-backed Gull

Scientific name	Formal English name
<i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>	Ross's Gull
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Kittiwake
<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	Ivory Gull
STERNIDAE	
<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Gull-billed Tern
<i>Sterna caspia</i>	Caspian Tern
<i>Sterna maxima</i>	Royal Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern
<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Lesser Crested Tern
<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Sandwich Tern
<i>Sterna elegans</i>	Elegant Tern
<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Roscate Tern
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common Tern
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Arctic Tern
<i>Sterna aleutica</i>	Aleutian Tern
<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	Forster's Tern
<i>Sterna repressa</i>	White-checked Tern
<i>Sterna anaethetus</i>	Bridled Tern
<i>Sterna fuscata</i>	Sooty Tern
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Little Tern
<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	Least Tern
<i>Sterna saundersi</i>	Saunders's Tern
<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Whiskered Tern
<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Black Tern
<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	White-winged Black Tern
<i>Anous stolidus</i>	Brown Noddy
RYNCHOPIDAE	
<i>Rynchops flavirostris</i>	African Skimmer
ALCIDAE	
<i>Uria aalge</i>	Common Guillemot
<i>Uria lomvia</i>	Brünnich's Guillemot
<i>Alca torda</i>	Razorbill
<i>Pinguinus impennis</i>	Great Auk
<i>Cepphus grylle</i>	Black Guillemot
<i>Synthliboramphus antiquus</i>	Ancient Murrelet
<i>Alle alle</i>	Little Auk
<i>Aethia cristatella</i>	Crested Auklet
<i>Cyclorhynchus psittacula</i>	Parakeet Auklet
<i>Fratrula arctica</i>	Puffin
PTEROCLIDIDAE	
<i>Pterocles lichtensteinii</i>	Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse
<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>	Crowned Sandgrouse
<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>	Spotted Sandgrouse
<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse
<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
<i>Pterocles alchata</i>	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
<i>Syrhaptes paradoxus</i>	Pallas's Sandgrouse
COLUMBIDAE	
<i>Columba livia</i>	Rock Dove
<i>Columba oenas</i>	Stock Dove
<i>Columba eversmanni</i>	Yellow-eyed Stock Dove
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Wood Pigeon
<i>Columba trocaz</i>	Trocaz Pigeon
<i>Columba bollii</i>	Bolle's Pigeon
<i>Columba junoniae</i>	Laurel Pigeon
<i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>	African Collared Dove
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Collared Dove
<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Turtle Dove
<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	Oriental Turtle Dove
<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Laughing Dove
<i>Oena capensis</i>	Namaqua Dove
<i>Zenaidura macroura</i>	Mourning Dove

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PSITTACIDAE		CORACIIDAE	
<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>	Monk Parakeet	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	European Roller
<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>	Abyssinian Roller
CUCULIDAE		<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Indian Roller
<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Eurystomus gaururus</i>	Broad-billed Roller
<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	Great Spotted Cuckoo	UPUPIDAE	
<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	Didric Cuckoo	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Hoopoe
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Common Cuckoo	PICIDAE	
<i>Cuculus saturatus</i>	Oriental Cuckoo	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Wryneck
<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	Black-billed Cuckoo	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	Northern Flicker
<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Picus canus</i>	Grey-headed Woodpecker
<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	Senegal Coucal	<i>Picus viridis</i>	Green Woodpecker
TYTONIDAE		<i>Picus vaillantii</i>	Levaillant's Green Woodpecker
<i>Tyto alba</i>	Barn Owl	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	Black Woodpecker
STRIGIDAE		<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
<i>Otus brucei</i>	Striated Scops Owl	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Great Spotted Woodpecker
<i>Otus scops</i>	Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>	Syrian Woodpecker
<i>Bubo bubo</i>	Eagle Owl	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>	Middle Spotted Woodpecker
<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	Brown Fish Owl	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>	White-backed Woodpecker
<i>Nyctea scandiaca</i>	Snowy Owl	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
<i>Surnia ulula</i>	Hawk Owl	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>	Three-toed Woodpecker
<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>	Pygmy Owl	TYRANNIDAE	
<i>Athene noctua</i>	Little Owl	<i>Empidonax virens</i>	Acadian Flycatcher
<i>Strix aluco</i>	Tawny Owl	ALAUDIDAE	
<i>Strix butleri</i>	Hume's Owl	<i>Eremopterix signata</i>	Chestnut-headed Sparrow-lark
<i>Strix uralensis</i>	Ural Owl	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	Black-crowned Sparrow-lark
<i>Strix nebulosa</i>	Great Grey Owl	<i>Eremalauda dunni</i>	Dunn's Lark
<i>Asio otus</i>	Long-eared Owl	<i>Ammomanes cincturus</i>	Bar-tailed Desert Lark
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Short-eared Owl	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	Desert Lark
<i>Asio capensis</i>	Marsh Owl	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	Hoopoe Lark
<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	Tengmalm's Owl	<i>Chersophilus duponti</i>	Dupont's Lark
CAPRIMULCIDAE		<i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i>	Thick-billed Lark
<i>Caprimulgus nubicus</i>	Nubian Nightjar	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	Calandra Lark
<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	European Nightjar	<i>Melanocorypha bimaculata</i>	Bimaculated Lark
<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>	Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Melanocorypha leucoptera</i>	White-winged Lark
<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>	Egyptian Nightjar	<i>Melanocorypha yeltoniensis</i>	Black Lark
<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Common Nighthawk	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Short-toed Lark
APOIDIDAE		<i>Calandrella acutirostris</i>	Hume's Lark
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	White-throated Needletail Swift	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>	Lesser Short-toed Lark
<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	Chimney Swift	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Crested Lark
<i>Ipus alexandri</i>	Cape Verde Swift	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	Thekla Lark
<i>Ipus unicolor</i>	Plain Swift	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Wood Lark
<i>Ipus apus</i>	Common Swift	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	Oriental Lark
<i>Ipus pallidus</i>	Pallid Swift	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Sky Lark
<i>Ipus pacificus</i>	Pacific Swift	<i>Alauda razae</i>	Raso Lark
<i>Ipus melba</i>	Alpine Swift	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Horned Lark
<i>Ipus caffer</i>	White-rumped Swift	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>	Tcmminek's Horned Lark
<i>Ipus affinis</i>	Little Swift	HIRUNDINIDAE	
<i>Ipsius parvus</i>	African Palm Swift	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	Plain Martin
ALCEDINIDAE		<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sand Martin
<i>Alcyon smymensis</i>	Smyrna Kingfisher	<i>Riparia cincla</i>	Banded Martin
<i>Alcyon leucocephala</i>	Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	Tree Swallow
<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Common Kingfisher	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	Rock Martin
<i>Alcyon alcyon</i>	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Crag Martin
	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Barn Swallow
EROPIDAE		<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>	Ethiopian Swallow
<i>Erops orientalis</i>	Little Green Bee-eater	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Red-rumped Swallow
<i>Erops superciliosus</i>	Blue-checked Bee-cater	<i>Hirundo pyrrhonota</i>	Cliff Swallow
<i>Erops apiaster</i>	European Bee-cater	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	House Martin
MOTACILLIDAE		MOTACILLIDAE	
		<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	Richard's Pipit

Scientific name	Formal English name	Scientific name	Formal English name
<i>Anthus godlewskii</i>	Blyth's Pipit	<i>Myrmecocichla aethiops</i>	Northern Anteater-chat
<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Tawny Pipit	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Isabelline Wheatear
<i>Anthus berthelotii</i>	Berthelot's Pipit	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Northern Wheatear
<i>Anthus similis</i>	Long-billed Pipit	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	Pied Wheatear
<i>Anthus hodgsoai</i>	Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Oenanthe cyprica</i>	Cyprus Pied Wheatear
<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Tree Pipit	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	Black-eared Wheatear
<i>Anthus gustavi</i>	Pechora Pipit	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Desert Wheatear
<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Meadow Pipit	<i>Oenanthe finschii</i>	Finsch's Wheatear
<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>	Red-rumped Wheatear
<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	Rock Pipit	<i>Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna</i>	Red-tailed Wheatear
<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Water Pipit	<i>Oenanthe picata</i>	Variable Wheatear
<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	Buff-bellied Pipit	<i>Oenanthe lugens</i>	Mourning Wheatear
<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Oenanthe monacha</i>	Hooded Wheatear
<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Citrine Wagtail	<i>Oenanthe alboniger</i>	Hume's Wheatear
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Grey Wagtail	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	White-crowned Black Wheatear
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Pied Wagtail	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	Black Wheatear
<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>	African Pied Wagtail	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	Rock Thrush
PYCNONOTIDAE		<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Blue Rock Thrush
<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	White-checked Bulbul	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	White's Thrush
<i>Pycnonotus xanthopygos</i>	White-spectacled Bulbul	<i>Zoothera sibirica</i>	Siberian Thrush
<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	Garden Bulbul	<i>Zoothera naevia</i>	Varied Thrush
BOMBYCILLIDAE		<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	Wood Thrush
<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	Cedar Waxwing	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	Hermit Thrush
<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	Swainson's Thrush
<i>Hypocolius ampelaeus</i>	Grey Hypocolius	<i>Catharus minimus</i>	Grey-checked Thrush
CINCLIDAE		<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	Veery
<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Dipper	<i>Turdus unicolor</i>	Tickell's Thrush
TROGLODYTIDAE		<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Ring Ouzel
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Wren	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird
MIMIDAE		<i>Turdus obscurus</i>	Eyebrowed Thrush
<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Turdus naumanni</i>	Dusky Thrush
<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	Brown Thrasher	<i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	Dark-throated Thrush
<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	Grey Catbird	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Fieldfare
PRUNELLIDAE		<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Hedge Accentor	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Redwing
<i>Prunella montanella</i>	Siberian Accentor	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Mistle Thrush
<i>Prunella ocularis</i>	Radde's Accentor	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	American Robin
<i>Prunella atrogularis</i>	Black-throated Accentor	SYLVIIDAE	
<i>Prunella collaris</i>	Alpine Accentor	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Cetti's Warbler
TURDIDAE		<i>Cisticola juacidis</i>	Zitting Cisticola
<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>	Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>	Graceful Prinia
<i>Cercotrichas podobe</i>	Black Scrub-robin	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>	Streaked Scrub Warbler
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin	<i>Locustella certhiola</i>	Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler
<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Locustella lanceolata</i>	Lanceolated Warbler
<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Rufous Nightingale	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Grasshopper Warbler
<i>Luscinia calliope</i>	Siberian Rubythroat	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	River Warbler
<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Bluethroat	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	Savi's Warbler
<i>Luscinia cyane</i>	Siberian Blue Robin	<i>Locustella fasciolata</i>	Gray's Grasshopper Warbler
<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>	Moustached Warbler
<i>Irania gutturalis</i>	White-throated Robin	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	Aquatic Warbler
<i>Phoenicurus erythronotus</i>	Eversmann's Redstart	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Sedge Warbler
<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Black Redstart	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	Paddyfield Warbler
<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Common Redstart	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	Blyth's Reed Warbler
<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>	Moussier's Redstart	<i>Acrocephalus brevipennis</i>	Cape Verde Warbler
<i>Phoenicurus erythrogaster</i>	Güldenstädt's Redstart	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	Marsh Warbler
<i>Cercomela melanura</i>	Blackstart	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Reed Warbler
<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Whinchief	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	Clamorous Reed Warbler
<i>Saxicola dacotiae</i>	Fuerteventura Chat	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Great Reed Warbler
<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Common Stonechat	<i>Acrocephalus orientalis</i>	Oriental Reed Warbler
<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	Pied Stonechat	<i>Acrocephalus griseldis</i>	Basra Reed Warbler
		<i>Acrocephalus aedon</i>	Thick-billed Warbler
		<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	Olivaceous Warbler
		<i>Hippolais caligata</i>	Booted Warbler
		<i>Hippolais languida</i>	Upcher's Warbler

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<i>Hippolais olivetorum</i>	Olive-tree Warbler	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Blue Tit
<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	Icterine Warbler	<i>Parus cyanus</i>	Azure Tit
<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	Melodious Warbler	<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit
<i>Sylvia sarda</i>	Marmora's Warbler		
<i>Sylvia undata</i>	Dartford Warbler	SITTIDAE	
<i>Sylvia deserticola</i>	Tristram's Warbler	<i>Sitta krueperi</i>	Krüper's Nuthatch
<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sitta whiteheadi</i>	Corsican Nuthatch
<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sitta ledanti</i>	Algerian Nuthatch
<i>Sylvia nystacea</i>	Ménétries's Warbler	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	Red-breasted Nuthatch
<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Wood Nuthatch
<i>Sylvia melanothorax</i>	Cyprus Warbler	<i>Sitta tephronota</i>	Eastern Rock Nuthatch
<i>Sylvia rueppellii</i>	Rüppell's Warbler	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>	Western Rock Nuthatch
<i>Sylvia nana</i>	Desert Warbler		
<i>Sylvia leucomelaena</i>	Arabian Warbler	TICHODROMADIDAE	
<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	Orphean Warbler	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	Wallcreeper
<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	Barred Warbler		
<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Lesser Whitethroat	CERTHIIDAE	
<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Common Whitethroat	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Eurasian Treecreeper
<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Garden Warbler	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	Short-toed Treecreeper
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Blackcap		
<i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i>	Green Warbler	REMIZIDAE	
<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Greenish Warbler	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	Penduline Tit
<i>Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus</i>	Two-barred Warbler		
<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	Arctic Warbler	NECTARINIIDAE	
<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	Pallas's Leaf Warbler	<i>Anthreptes platunus</i>	Pygmy Sunbird
<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Anthreptes metallicus</i>	Nile Valley Sunbird
<i>Phylloscopus schweurzi</i>	Radde's Warbler	<i>Nectarinia osea</i>	Palestine Sunbird
<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	Dusky Warbler		
<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	Bonelli's Warbler	ORIOLIDAE	
<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Wood Warbler	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Golden Oriole
<i>Phylloscopus neglectus</i>	Plain Leaf Warbler		
<i>Phylloscopus sindianus</i>	Mountain Chiffchaff	LANIIDAE	
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Chiffchaff	<i>Tchagra senegala</i>	Black-crowned Tchagra
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Willow Warbler	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Brown Shrike
<i>Regulus calendula</i>	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	Isabelline Shrike
<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Golderest	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Red-backed Shrike
<i>Regulus teneriffae</i>	Tenerife Kinglet	<i>Lanius schach</i>	Long-tailed Shrike
<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	Firecrest	<i>Lanius minor</i>	Lesser Grey Shrike
		<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	Great Grey Shrike
		<i>Lanius senator</i>	Woodchat Shrike
		<i>Lanius nubicus</i>	Masked Shrike
MUSCICAPIDAE			
<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	Asian Brown Flycatcher	CORVIDAE	
<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Eurasian Jay
<i>Ficedula parva</i>	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>	Siberian Jay
<i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>	Mugimaki Flycatcher	<i>Cyanopica cyana</i>	Azure-winged Magpie
<i>Ficedula narcissina</i>	Narcissus Flycatcher	<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie
<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>	Semi-collared Flycatcher	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Nutteracker
<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	Collared Flycatcher	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	Yellow-billed Chough
<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Red-billed Chough
		<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Eurasian Jackdaw
TMALIIDAE		<i>Corvus dauuricus</i>	Daurian Jackdaw
<i>Parus biarmicus</i>	Bearded Tit	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	House Crow
<i>Turdoides altilirostris</i>	Iraq Babbler	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Rook
<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	Common Babbler	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Carrion Crow
<i>Turdoides squamiceps</i>	Arabian Babbler	<i>Corvus albus</i>	Pied Crow
<i>Turdoides fulvus</i>	Fulvous Babbler	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	Brown-necked Raven
		<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common Raven
LEGITHALIDAE		<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>	Fan-tailed Raven
<i>Legithalos caudatus</i>	Long-tailed Tit		
		STURNIDAE	
ARIDAE		<i>Onychognathus tristramii</i>	Tristram's Starling
<i>Parus palustris</i>	Marsh Tit	<i>Sturnus sturninus</i>	Daurian Starling
<i>Parus lugubris</i>	Sombre Tit	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common Starling
<i>Parus montanus</i>	Willow Tit	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	Spotless Starling
<i>Parus cinctus</i>	Siberian Tit	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>	Rosy Starling
<i>Parus cristatus</i>	Crested Tit	<i>Sturnus cineraceus</i>	White-checked Starling
<i>Parus ater</i>	Coal Tit	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Common Myna

Scientific name	Formal English name
PASSERIDAE	
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow
<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	Spanish Sparrow
<i>Passer moabiticus</i>	Dead Sea Sparrow
<i>Passer iagoensis</i>	Cape Verde Sparrow
<i>Passer simplex</i>	Desert Sparrow
<i>Passer montanus</i>	Tree Sparrow
<i>Passer luteus</i>	Golden Sparrow
<i>Petronia brachydactyla</i>	Pale Rock Sparrow
<i>Petronia xanthocolis</i>	Yellow-throated Sparrow
<i>Petronia petronia</i>	Rock Sparrow
<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>	Snowfinch
PLOCEIDAE	
<i>Ploceus manyar</i>	Streaked Weaver
ESTRIDIDAE	
<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	Senegal Firefinch
<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	Common Waxbill
<i>Amandava amandava</i>	Avadavat
<i>Euodice malabarica</i>	Indian Silverbill
<i>Euodice cantans</i>	African Silverbill
VIREONIDAE	
<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>	Yellow-throated Vireo
<i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	Philadelphia Vireo
<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Red-eyed Vireo
FRINGILLIDAE	
<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Chaffinch
<i>Fringilla teydea</i>	Blue Chaffinch
<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Brambling
<i>Serinus pusillus</i>	Red-fronted Serin
<i>Serinus serinus</i>	European Serin
<i>Serinus syriacus</i>	Syrian Serin
<i>Serinus canaria</i>	Canary
<i>Serinus citrinella</i>	Citril Finch
<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Greenfinch
<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Goldfinch
<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Siskin
<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Linnet
<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	Twite
<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Common Redpoll
<i>Carduelis homemanni</i>	Arctic Redpoll
<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	Two-barred Crossbill
<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Common Crossbill
<i>Loxia scotica</i>	Scottish Crossbill
<i>Loxia pyropsittacus</i>	Parrot Crossbill
<i>Rhodopechys sanguinea</i>	Crimson-winged Finch
<i>Rhodospiza obsoleta</i>	Desert Finch
<i>Bucanetes mongolicus</i>	Mongolian Finch
<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	Trumpeter Finch
<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	Common Rosefinch
<i>Carpodacus synoicus</i>	Sinai Rosefinch
<i>Carpodacus roseus</i>	Pallas's Rosefinch
<i>Carpodacus rubicilla</i>	Great Rosefinch
<i>Pnicola enucleator</i>	Pine Grosbeak
<i>Uragus sibiricus</i>	Long-tailed Rosefinch
<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Bullfinch
<i>Eophona personata</i>	Japanese Grosbeak
<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Hawfinch
<i>Hesperiphona vespertina</i>	Evening Grosbeak
PARULIDAE	
<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	Black-and-white Warbler
<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	Golden-winged Warbler
<i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	Tennessee Warbler
<i>Parula americana</i>	Northern Parula

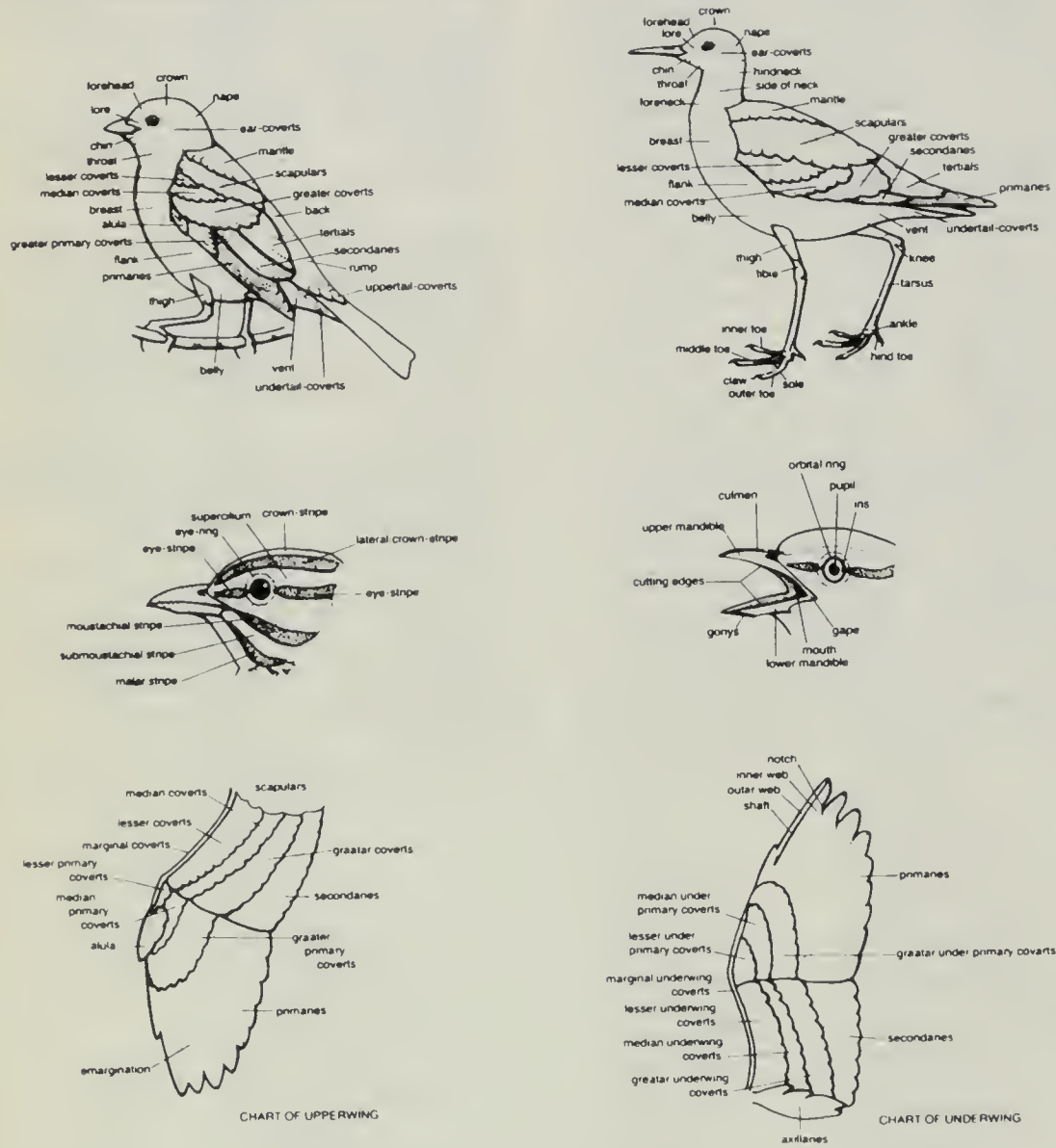
Scientific name	Formal English name
<i>Dendroica petechia</i> *	Yellow Warbler
<i>Dendroica pensylvanica</i>	Chestnut-sided Warbler
<i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>	Black-throated Blue Warbler
<i>Dendroica virens</i>	Black-throated Green Warbler
<i>Dendroica fusca</i>	Blackburnian Warbler
<i>Dendroica tigrina</i>	Cape May Warbler
<i>Dendroica magnolia</i>	Magnolia Warbler
<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Yellow-rumped Warbler
<i>Dendroica palmarum</i>	Palm Warbler
<i>Dendroica striata</i>	Blackpoll Warbler
<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	American Redstart
<i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>	Ovenbird
<i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	Northern Waterthrush
<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	Common Yellowthroat
<i>Wilsonia citrina</i>	Hooded Warbler
<i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>	Wilson's Warbler
<i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>	Canada Warbler
THRUPIDAE	
<i>Piranga rubra</i>	Summer Tanager
<i>Piranga olivacea</i>	Scarlet Tanager
EMBERIZIDAE	
<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>	Rufous-sided Towhee
<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	Lark Sparrow
<i>Ammodramus sandwichensis</i>	Savannah Sparrow
<i>Zonotrichia iliaca</i>	Fox Sparrow
<i>Zonotrichia melodia</i>	Song Sparrow
<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	White-crowned Sparrow
<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	White-throated Sparrow
<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Dark-eyed Junco
<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Lapland Longspur
<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Snow Bunting
<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	Black-faced Bunting
<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	Pine Bunting
<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Yellowhammer
<i>Emberiza cirrus</i>	Cirl Bunting
<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Rock Bunting
<i>Emberiza cioides</i>	Meadow Bunting
<i>Emberiza striolata</i>	House Bunting
<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting
<i>Emberiza cineracea</i>	Cinereous Bunting
<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	Ortolan Bunting
<i>Emberiza buechanani</i>	Grey-necked Bunting
<i>Emberiza caesia</i>	Cretschmar's Bunting
<i>Emberiza chrysophrys</i>	Yellow-browed Bunting
<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	Rustic Bunting
<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	Little Bunting
<i>Emberiza rutila</i>	Chestnut Bunting
<i>Emberiza aureola</i>	Yellow-breasted Bunting
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Reed Bunting
<i>Emberiza pallasi</i>	Pallas's Reed Bunting
<i>Emberiza bruniceps</i>	Red-headed Bunting
<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	Black-headed Bunting
<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Corn Bunting
<i>Spiza americana</i>	Dickeissel
<i>Phaethicus ludovicianus</i>	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
<i>Guiraca caerulea</i>	Blue Grosbeak
<i>Passerina cyanea</i>	Indigo Bunting
<i>Passerina ciris</i>	Painted Bunting
ICTERIDAE	
<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Bobolink
<i>Molothrus ater</i>	Brown-headed Cowbird
<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	Common Grackle
<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>	Yellow-headed Blackbird
<i>Icterus galbula</i>	Northern Oriole

Appendix. English names recommended for use in World lists

These fuller formal names are needed on a World scale, but the shorter versions given in the main list are those recommended for use in a Western Palearctic context

Scientific name	Formal English name	Scientific name	Formal English name
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Northern Fulmar	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	Greater Hoopoe Lark
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	European Shag	<i>Phyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Eurasian Crag Martin
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	White-throated Dipper
<i>Geronticus eremita</i>	Northern Bald Ibis	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Winter Wren
<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	European Honey-buzzard	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	European Robin
<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Eurasian Griffon Vulture	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Common Blackbird
<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Common Grasshopper Warbler
<i>Lagopus mutus</i>	Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Eurasian Reed Warbler
<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	Western Capercaillie	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Common Chiffchaff
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Moorhen	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	Eurasian Penduline Tit
<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Eurasian Golden Oriole
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Pica pica</i>	Black-billed Magpie
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Pied Avocet	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Spotted Nutcracker
<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	Mountain Dotterel	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Eurasian Tree Sparrow
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Passer luteus</i>	Sudan Golden Sparrow
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>	White-winged Snowfinch
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Amandawa amandawa</i>	Red Avadavat
<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Common Chaffinch
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Serinus canaria</i>	Island Canary
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	European Greenfinch
<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	European Turtle Dove	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	European Goldfinch
<i>Bubo bubo</i>	Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Eurasian Siskin
<i>Surnia ulula</i>	Northern Hawk Owl	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Common Linnet
<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>	Eurasian Pygmy Owl	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Common Bullfinch
<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Eurasian Wryneck		

Bird topography charts



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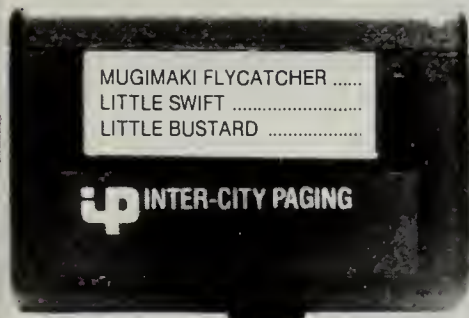
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Monthly marathon

The rear view of the tatty passerine on a rusty railing (plate 256 in the October 1992 issue) was named as follows:

Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	(35%)
House Sparrow <i>P. domesticus</i>	(30%)
White-throated Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	(12%)
Hedge Accentor <i>Prunella modularis</i>	(5%)
Rose-breasted Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	(3%)
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	(3%)
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	(3%)
Siberian Thrush <i>Zoothera sibirica</i>	(2%)

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with a few votes each for Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* and White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*.

As is nearly always the case, the most-frequently named species was the correct answer. This Tree Sparrow was photographed in April 1989 by Richard C. Hart in Hong Kong, where the species does, of course, take over the urban niche occupied by House Sparrows in most of Europe. Perhaps this was part of the identification problem, for this photograph eliminated half of the leading contenders in this competition (after they had achieved sequences of 17 correct answers in a row), including one former 'Monthly marathon' winner and two current members of the Rarities Committee. We are very sad to see them drop to the back of the field after such a splendid run. Still in contention at the front of the field are Roy Hargreaves, Hannu Jännes and Dave Nurney (all on 18-in-a-row sequences) and Dr S. K. Armstrong (with a 17-in-a-row sequence). One of them will surely soon win the prize: a SUNBIRD holiday of his/her choice in Africa, Asia or North America.

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1. Only current individual subscribers to *British Birds* are eligible to take part. Entrants should give their name, address and BB reference number on their entry. Only one entry is permitted per person each month.
2. Entries must be sent by post, each one a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) by 15th of succeeding month. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
3. All 'BB' subscribers are eligible, except members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of SUNBIRD/WINGS Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Newnorth Print Ltd. (Members of 'BB' Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors—including bird-photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition—are eligible unless proscribed above.)
4. To win, a *British Birds* subscriber must correctly identify the species shown in ten consecutive photographs included in this competition. The 'Monthly marathon' will continue until the prize has been won.
5. In the event of two or more 'BB' subscribers achieving the ten-in-a-row simultaneously, the competition will

continue each month until one of them (or someone else!) achieves a longer run of correct entries than any other contestant.

6. In the event of any dispute, including controversy over the identity of any of the birds in the photographs, the decision of the Managing Editor of *British Birds* is final and binding on all parties.
7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.



8. 'Monthly marathon' (thirtieth stage in fifth contest or first or second in sixth contest: photograph number 79). Identify the species. *Read the rules (below)*, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 28th February 1993



Announcements

Two new British birds The BOU Records Committee has recently accepted the following two records which had previously been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee. Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* (Charlton's Pond, Billingham, Cleveland, 11th January to 21st April 1989) and Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (Calf of Man, Isle of Man, 31st October and 1st November 1989) will both be added to Category A of the British List upon publication of the 18th Report of the BOU Records Committee in *Ibis* (volume 135, April 1993).

Send in your 1992 records now If you have not already done so, now is the time to submit all your relevant 1992 records. The names and addresses of the County/Regional Recorders were listed last year on pages 28-30.

Free subscriptions for County/Regional Recorders We are pleased, once again, to be able to offer free subscriptions to the County/Regional Recorders, as our way of saying 'Thank you' to them for the hard work which they contribute to British ornithology in their 'free time'.

Help 'BB' please We plan to establish an investment fund to help to support *British Birds* in the coming years. As a non-profit-making journal, *BB* relies on subscription income, donations and sponsorship. All income is devoted to publishing *BB*, for the benefit of ornithology. We aim to create an invested fund with the interest used to assist *British Birds*.

May we suggest to any long-standing, loyal subscribers the possibility of remembering *British Birds* in your wills? We want to see *BB* continuing to thrive into the twenty-first century.

'The Carl Zeiss Award' This award (see *Brit. Birds* 85: 666) aims to encourage the submission of potentially useful photographs to the Rarities Committee, to assist the process of individual record assessment, to increase the available reference material, and for possible publication. The sponsors, *Carl Zeiss—Germany*, are offering an annual prize of Carl Zeiss 10×40 B/GAT Dialyt or 7×42 B/GAT binoculars, and runners-up will receive high-quality sew-on woven badges featuring the Carl Zeiss Award logo.



Bird Photograph of the Year This annual competition is once again sponsored by two long-standing friends of *British Birds*, the publishing firms Christopher Helm (Publishers) and HarperCollins.

Entrants should read the rules carefully (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36, or write for a copy).

The judging panel will consist of Dr R. J. Chandler, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Don Smith and Roger Tidman.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1977), Peter Lowes (1978), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1979), Don Smith (1980), Richard T. Mills (1981), Dennis Coutts (1982), David M. Cottridge (1983), John Lawton Roberts (1984), C. R. Knights (1985), Alan Moffett (1986), Dr Kevin Carlson (1987), Bob Glover (1988 & 1992), Hanne Eriksen (1989 & 1990) and Philip Perry (1991).

The 1993 awards (cheque for £100 and engraved salver for the winner, cheques for £40 and £25 for the second and third, and £25-worth of HarperCollins books and £25-worth of Christopher Helm books for each of the top three photographers) will be presented at a Press Reception in London in May or June. The runners-up will be welcome to attend the award presentation. There is an additional award of £100 for the top-rated photograph taken in Britain, the 'Windrush Photos Award'.

The closing date for entries is 31st January 1993. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Illustrator of the Year This annual competition will again be sponsored by *Kowa* telescopes.

Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings for this competition. Entrants should read the rules very carefully (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36-37, or write for a copy), especially in relation to the exact sizes required.

The judging panel will consist of Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Keith Shackleton and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £100, a *Kowa* TSN-3 20-60× zoom telescope and an inscribed salver; the second-placed artist £40 and a TSN-1 20× W *Kowa* telescope; and the third-placed artist £25 and a TS-601 20× W *Kowa* telescope (all three telescopes with cases). All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception at The Mall Galleries in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. All artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in previous years has provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists. The winners' entries will also be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries.

Previous winners have been Crispin Fisher (1979), Norman Arlou (1980 & 1981), Alan Harris (1982), Martin Woodcock (1983), Bruce Pearson (1984), Ian Lewington (1985), Chris Rose (1986), David Quinn (1987), Martin Hallam (1988), John Cox (1989), Gordon Trunkfield (1990), John Davis (1991) and John Gale (1992).

The closing date will be 15th March 1993; entries should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



The PJC Award A handsome trophy, the PJC Award, is presented annually, in memory of the late Pauline Jean Cook, to the artist whose single drawing submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition is selected by the judges for its individual merit. The holder of the PJC Award also receives an inscribed book as a permanent symbol of the achievement. The current holder is Richard Fowling (*Brit. Birds* 80: 250-251; 83: 255-261; 84: 298-307; 85: 417).

The Richard Richardson Award To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £60) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 15th March 1993. The winner's entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. Previous winners have been Alan F. Johnston (1979), Andrew Stock (1980), Darren Rees (1981), Keith Colcombe (1982 & 1984), Gary Wright (1983), Ian Lewington (1985), Timothy Hinley (1986), Andrew Birch (1987), John Cox (1988), Stephen Message (1989), Antony Disley (1990 & 1992) and Andrew Birch & Peter Leonard (1991). This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.



Front-cover designs for sale The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £30 to £185; the average has been £103. Why not send in your bid each month? If you are successful (if your bid is the highest, and it exceeds the artist's reserve price) you will be asked to pay the sum you bid, plus £1.50 for postage and packing. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Photographs and drawings may be for sale Many of the photographers and artists whose pictures appear in *British Birds* welcome the opportunity to sell their work. Anyone who wishes to obtain either photographic prints or original drawings is welcome to write (making an enquiry about availability, making an appropriate offer, or seeking the price) to the photographer or artist concerned, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We shall forward all such letters, as a service to our readers and contributors.

Payments to photographers and artists There is a long tradition of photographers and artists providing their work free of charge to *British Birds* (as do many other ornithologists, in many other ways). As a non-profit-making organisation, equivalent in many ways to the BTO or the American Birding Association, we have greatly welcomed this generosity.

With the advent, however, of several new, commercial magazines—such as *Bird Watching*, *Birding World*, *Birdwatch* and *Birds Illustrated*—all of which pay fees to contributors, we have reconsidered our position. Since it is always our aim to include within the pages of *British Birds* the very best photographs that are available, we have decided to introduce modest fees for published photographs and artwork, starting with those in this issue.

We shall be despatching fee statements at six-monthly intervals, stating the fees due, and giving contributors the opportunity to accept the fees or to ask for all or part of their payments to be given to an ornithological charity of their choice, or to waive all or part of them in favour of 'BB'. We are aware that many photographers and artists have been and still are delighted to help 'BB' by providing their work free of charge, and we shall of course continue to be most grateful for this assistance.)

No claims need be made. Statements will be issued in due course.

Books in British BirdShop The following books have been added this month:

- Ali *Field Guide to the Birds of the Eastern Himalayas* (OUP)
- Axell *Of Birds and Men* (Book Guild)
- Burton *Bird Migration* (Aurum)
- Collar *et al.* *Threatened Birds of the Americas: the ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book* (ICBP/IUCN)
- Cook *The Birds of Moray and Nairn* (Mercat Press)
- Nilssen *Mallards* (Swan Hill Press)
- Porter *et al.* *Flight Identification of European Raptors* (Poyser)
- Svensson *Identification Guide to European Passerines* 4th edn

Please use the form on pages vii & viii for *all* your book orders.



News and comment compiled by Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Less lead shot

A FIVE-YEAR PLAN to phase out the use of lead shot over wetlands has been agreed, and commenced last September. An initial three years is allowed for the development of suitable lead-free shot, followed by a two-year voluntary ban on the use of lead shot in 12-bore guns in wetlands.

The plan was agreed among members from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Department of the Environment, wild-fowlers and the shooting-equipment industry. If, as hoped, the plan leads to a complete ban, the wasteful death of birds by poisoning in our wetlands will be over.

Congratulations, Chris!

It is a great pleasure to offer our congratulations to Professor Christopher Perrins, Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology at Oxford University, who has been awarded the RSPB medal in recognition of the major contribution he has made to ornithology and bird conservation. His principal research interest has been population studies of common birds, including tits *Parus*, swifts *Apus*, seabirds and Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*. It was during one of his research projects on the Mute Swan that he discovered that lead poisoning was a significant cause of swan deaths, and this led to the legislation which banned the use of lead weights for fishing.

Safe refuge for Bean Geese

The RSPB has recently acquired the 230-ha Buckenham and Cantley Marshes in the Yare Valley, Norfolk, one of only two sites in the UK which regularly attract wintering flocks of the Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*. Nearly 500 Bean Geese visit the area, along with important wintering numbers of White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons* and Eurasian Wigeons *Anas penelope*. The RSPB hopes to manage the land as a nature reserve to increase its value for wildlife. It has the potential to become an important site for breeding waders such as Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*. Good news!

New Recorder

Tim Dean, Coastguard Cottages, South Walney Nature Reserve, Walney, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 3YQ, has taken over from Robert Spencer as Recorder for Cumbria.

To ensure that news coverage in this feature extends over the whole of Britain and Ireland, we have established a Regional News Team, whose members have agreed to act as our local correspondents. EDS

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—*Northeast*
Dave Holman—*East Anglia*
Anthony McGeehan—*Northern Ireland*
Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*
Alan Richards—*Midlands*
Dr Kenny Taylor—*Scotland*
David Tomlinson—*Southeast*
Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*
Keith Vinicombe—*Southwest*
John Wilson—*Northwest*

Drainage of internationally important wetland

Rahasane Turlough on the Dunkellin River, near Craughwell, Co. Galway, holds internationally important wintering populations of Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* and European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, as well as nationally important numbers of another 12 species of wintering waterfowl. Additionally, Rahasane is the best remaining example in Europe of a 'turlough' (i.e. a lake on limestone which floods and drains via sink-holes).

In August 1992, a group of local farmers carried out drainage work by excavating a 3-km-long channel. The Irish Wildbird Conservancy is calling for all such developments to be subject to planning permission and for realistic implementation of the EC's Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) scheme by the Irish Department of Agriculture. In the meantime, the IWC will be monitoring the area this winter to assess the impact on birds.

Bucks Bird Club/BTO Conference

A full house of 120 enjoyed the one-day meeting at Wendover, Buckinghamshire, on 3rd October 1992. Lectures were given by Philip Burton, Peter Cranswick, David Glue, Ken Smith and Jeremy Wilson on topics ranging from why we birdwatch to Green Sandpipers, wildfowl-counting, the benefit to birds of low-input farming, and raptors in the local area.

The BB mystery photos competition was very popular, although the back end of a Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* taking off not surprisingly baffled everyone. Bucks Bird Club Chairman, Dr Sandy Macfarlane, won the bottle of champagne and found himself in the embarrassing position of having to announce himself as the winner. (Contributed by Graeme Taylor)

'BB'-Sunbird trip

The August/September trip to the Volga Delta and the Tien Shan Mountains, led for 'BB' by Dr Algirdas Knystautas (Russian Nature Tours) and Paul Holt (Sunbird), met with great success. Birding highlights around the Volga Delta included, for instance, over 400 Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* and 40 White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in one day. In Kazakhstan, visits to the deserts, lakes and the mountains themselves produced such birds as Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*, Egyptian Nighthawk *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, Blue-checked Merops *superciliosus* and European Bee-eaters *M. apiaster*, White-winged Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucopertus*, Isabelline Oenanthe *isabellina*, Pied *O. pleschanka* and Desert Wheatears *O. deserti*, Paddyfield Acrocephalus *agricola* and Blyth's Reed Warblers *A. dumetorum*, Yellow-breasted Parus *flavipectus* and Turkestan Tit *P. bokharensis*, and Isabelline Lanius *isabellinus*, Red-backed *L. collurio*, Long-tailed *L. schach*, Lesser Grey *L. minor* and pallidirostris Great Grey Shrikes *L. excubitor*. The highlight of the trip for some was a visit to the Ornithological Research Station at Chokpak Pass, where our group—the first Westerners to visit the ringing operation in its 28-year history—had excellent opportunities to study Pallid Circus *macrourus* and Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus*, meena Oriental Turtle Doves *Streptopelia orientalis*, and Grey-necked *Emberiza buchanani*, Ortolan *E. hortulana* and Red-headed Buntings *E. bruniceps*, as well as a single Yellow-eyed Stock Dove *Columba eversmanni*. Over 2 million birds have been ringed there, with as many as 10,000 in a single day.

Worries before the tour about food, accommodation and travel in the now defunct Soviet Union proved to be largely unfounded; indeed, the only travel delay the group experienced was when returning from Moscow with British Airways. (Contributed by Paul Holt)

A lean, mean, ticking machine

Irish Wildbird Conservancy Council member Kieran Fahy has broken the Irish year-list record in some style. Despite a miserable October for all, he equalled the old record of 237 on 1st November, with Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. He promptly added Canada Goose

Branta canadensis, Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* and Smew *Mergus albellus* to reach 240 by 3rd November. His final total was 243, achieved with a Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* on 27th November. (Contributed by Oran O'Sullivan)

Any advance on 58?

Further to our note in July (85: 386), R. B. Warren of Felixstowe has written to tell us that his BB subscription dates back to vol. 29 no. 1—1935. This beats Stephen Marchant by one whole year.

New Youth Hostel and Field Centre on Islay

Magnus Magnusson, the Chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage, opened a new Youth Hostel and Field Centre in Port Charlotte, Isle of Islay, on 19th October 1992. The project is a joint one between the Scottish Youth Hostels Association and the Islay Natural History Trust, whose Director is Malcolm Ogilvie. The 42-bed hostel, finished to a very high standard, occupies the upper floor of a former distillery warehouse, while the ground floor has become the new Field Centre, replacing former very cramped quarters in the same village. It contains a large public display-area housing an exhibition of Islay's wildlife, together with a

library and 50-seat lecture room. Further expansion is planned, including a laboratory for up to 25 students.

The joint development offers excellent accommodation for birdwatchers, especially groups visiting from clubs and societies, who will be able to use the library and lecture room in the evenings. When the laboratory is completed, hopefully next year, school and university groups will be encouraged to come and study the natural history of one of the country's finest wildlife islands. For further information, write to Malcolm Ogilvie, Islay Field Centre, Port Charlotte, Isle of Islay PA48 7TX.

'Esso' tokens needed

The South Devon Bird Group is running an *Esso* Token Appeal and aims to exchange the tokens for binoculars which will then be passed to the RSPB as a contribution to their long-running appeal for secondhand or damaged optics. After repairs (if necessary), these are passed to staff in national parks and conservation groups overseas, who often lack the most basic of field research tools. The RSPB has so far distributed several thousand pairs and is keen to continue the appeal. A total of 220 *Esso* tokens will purchase a new pair of *Tasco* or *Hanimex* 8 × 30 binoculars in a soft case,

ready for instant despatch.

If you would like to contribute to this appeal, please send your *Esso* tokens to Peter J. Hopkin (ETA), 4a Powderham Crescent, Exeter EX4 6DA. Peter will keep a proper record of your contribution, but regrets that no acknowledgments can be made and thanks you in advance for your contribution to ornithology and conservation in the Developing World. If you wish to contribute your secondhand binoculars, send them direct to Dorothy Bashford, International Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Birdwatchers recovering after motor accident in Ireland

Three of Scotland's keenest birders, John Sweeney, Angus Murray and Chris McInerney, are recovering after a head-on car crash involving another keen birder, Stephen Foster, and his girlfriend, both from Northern Ireland. The lads from Scotland were returning from Co. Wexford on 5th September 1991 after successfully twitching a Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*. A fourth Scottish birder, Stephen Addinall, was travelling behind in a taxi when the accident happened, just 5 km from the ferry terminal at Larne. Stephen, his girlfriend, Chris and Angus have made a good recovery. John, who suffered by far the worst injuries, after undergoing a series of operations lasting 13 hours and three weeks of intensive care at the Northern Hospital, was transferred to a Glasgow hospital in mid October. We would like to thank Chris Murphy for passing this news to us. All at *BB* hope that everyone involved has a speedy and complete recovery.

New 'Russian Journal of Ornithology'

Announced as 'the first ornithological periodical in Russia since the 1930s and . . . the first non-governmental one for 70 years', *Russian Journal of Ornithology* is launched in 1992 with two issues; in future, it will appear quarterly. The Editor-in-chief is Dr Alexander Bardin.

Papers will be in Russian with an English summary, or in English. The 1992 subscription is £19 (UK), £22 (Europe), or £27 (rest of the world). All enquiries should be sent to E. Potapov, c/o EGI, Department of Zoology, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS, UK.

Proceedings of XX IOC

The five-volume, 3,120-page Proceedings of the International Ornithological Congress held in Christchurch, New Zealand, during 2nd-9th December 1990 are now available, price US\$300 or NZ\$500 (surface mail), from ACTA XX, NZ Ornithological Congress Trust Board, PO Box 12397, Wellington, New Zealand.

Young Ornithologists of the Year

The winners and runners-up this year were as follows:

JUNIOR (under 10 years)

1st Jenny Blair (9), Ampthill, Bedfordshire

2nd Clare Burton (8), Great Yarmouth, Norfolk

3rd Tom Fieldsend (9), Hindolveston, Norfolk

Runner-up: Helen Wood (8), Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire

INTERMEDIATE (10-12 years)

1st Alexander Lees (12), Grantham, Lincolnshire

2nd —

3rd —

Runners-up: Jenny Horne (11), Braunton, Devon, and John McAuley (11), Linlithgow, West Lothian

SENIOR

1st Jane Reid (17), Yarm, Cleveland

2nd Steven Turner (16), Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire

3rd David Anning (17), Deal, Kent

Special mention: Monn William Mancha (17), Nigeria

The competition, which was once again based upon an assessment of the entrants' actual field notebooks, was jointly sponsored by *British Birds* and, for the second year, *Young Telegraph*. The three judges, Kate Graham (Green Page Editor of *Young Telegraph*), Peter Holden (Young Ornithologists' Club) and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*BB*), were impressed by all three winning entries and also by the high standard among the leading entries in both the junior and senior sections. Unusually, however, the quality of all but one of the entries in the intermediate section (which are often up to the senior standard) was such that the judges felt unable to award second or third prizes.

The rules of the next competition, which is open to all YOC members and to readers under 18 years of age of *Young Telegraph* and *British Birds*, will be published in *Bird Life*. For information, or YOC membership details, write to YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

'The Magpie'

Issue no. 4 of this 'journal of ornithology for the Sheffield region' was published in late 1992, just seven years after no. 3. Although of primary interest within its own region, this well-produced, 50-page volume contains seven papers and three notes. The papers include a comparison by Jeff Lunn of arrival dates of summer migrants in the Barnsley area during 1875-84 and 1975-84. A total of 18 species showed no significant change between these two periods one hundred years apart, but five species now arrive significantly earlier: Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (mean arrival

date was 2nd May, but is now 10th April), Common Swift *Apus apus* (9th May and 27th April), Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (9th April and 26th March), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (25th April and 12th April) and Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (1st April and 19th March). Only one species now arrives significantly later: Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (10th April and 21st April).

The Magpie, edited by D. Herringshaw and J. Hornbuckle, is available, price £2.00 (including postage), from A. J. Morris, 4a Raven Road, Nether Edge, Sheffield S7 1SB. (JTRS)

A new Phyllosc

A new species of leaf warbler *Phylloscopus* has been described by Per Alström, Urban Olsson and Peter Colston (*Ibis* 134: 329-334). Found in the mountains of Sichuan Province in Central China, and named *Phylloscopus sichuanensis* (with the English name Chinese Leaf Warbler), it is morphologically similar to and partly sympatric with Lemon-rumped Warbler *P. chloronotus* (which is sometimes treated as a race of Pallas's Leaf Warbler *P. proregulus*), but has quite different song and call, as well as differences in habitat and nest location. The discovery of this new species was made during trips to China in April-June 1989 and June 1990.

Modernisation of 'BB'

Regular readers will be noticing various innovations this month and in the rest of the issues in 1993, such as the introduction of the feature 'From the Rarities Committee files' and the appointment of our Regional News Team for 'News and comment'.

Do not fail to note, however, the most dramatic evidence of the Editor's modern, updated, innovative thinking, which is revealed by the 50-year leap forward in time for our spacefiller which has, in a flash, become 'Twenty-five years ago . . .'. Rather more of us may now be able to recall the events described from first-hand experience.



IWC news

Corn Crakes in 1992 An estimated total of 52 singing Corn Crakes *Crex crex* was recorded in north Donegal this year, down by 10% on the 1991 estimate. Survey work in Corn Crake areas included the further monitoring of mowing regimes: data were compiled for a total of 593 ha of cut meadow and showed that the mean mowing date was earlier than last year. Early cover availability was surveyed again, and grazing levels were recorded for the first time since the start of the fieldwork programme. The results of the survey indicate that the intensification of pastoral farming has mounted, with the further degeneration of secure and ecologically favourable habitat. Observations, and evidence in the form of two destroyed nests, have added to the scientific opinion that the timing and methods of the grass-fodder harvest pose a serious threat to the Corn Crake's breeding success and survival. The introduction of a Corncrake Grant Scheme enabled the use of alternative methods by 35 farmers on about 20% of the eligible habitat. The scheme was, however, judged to have been largely unsuccessful at modifying the harvest regimes of intensively managed meadow. This was due mainly to the levels of payment offering inadequate compensation for the measures sought.

The IWC also carried out fieldwork in the Shannon Callows for the second successive year in 1992. A total of 94 singing Corn Crakes was located in the area, with one further individual recorded on the callows of the River Suck. This represents a decline of 9% since last year and a decline of 25% since 1988. An area of 480 ha was monitored weekly for cutting and it was found that the cutting season began early this year owing to good weather in May and June. The season was, however, protracted owing to poor weather in July and August. Totals of ten nests and 59 chicks were observed during mowing operations. Eight chicks and one adult female were known to have been killed as a result of mowing. A grazing survey was carried out to establish the extent to which the callows are grazed by sheep, cattle and horses. Publicity work was also carried out at local shows and schools in the area and almost 200 farmers were contacted and advised on 'Corn Crake-friendly' mowing techniques. The principal conclusion is that the decline of Corn Crakes will continue unless a grant scheme to delay mowing is introduced.

ORAN O'SULLIVAN

Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland



ICBP news

Italian aid to extinction A road development project in Morocco, funded by aid from the Italian government, threatens Merja Zerga, the last known wintering grounds of the critically threatened Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*.

An extensive road-building programme is badly needed in Morocco, and the newly announced plans for a highway which will ultimately connect Rabat, the capital, with Tangier, on the coast of the Straits of Gibraltar, will enhance the country's communications. Although the new main road itself will skirt the southeast side of the wetlands of Merja Zerga, a slip-road from the junction to the coastal resort of Moulay Bousselham will cross the very area on which the last four known Slender-billed Curlews overwinter.

The lagoon of Merja Zerga on the Atlantic coast of north Morocco, 120 km north of Rabat, was declared a Ramsar site by the Government of Morocco because of its internationally important numbers of seven species of wader. Two other threatened species, Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, also use the wetland, as do thousands of Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*.

What can you do? Please write to the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs (On. Emilio Colombo, Ministro degli Affari Esteri, Farnesina, Foro Italico, Roma, Italy) expressing your concern over the plight of the Slender-billed Curlew, and asking that the junction lay-out be reconsidered and the slip road re-routed so that the saltmarsh and the Slender-billed Curlews are left undisturbed.

A monograph on the Slender-billed Curlew is available from ICBP, price £8.00.

GARY ALLPORT

International Council for Bird Preservation, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ



Mystery photographs

184 Last month's swimming bird, with its elongated body, short tail, medium-long and stout neck, and elongated head with long bill (plate 301, repeated here), is obviously a diver *Gavia*. The problem with identifying divers is that they tend to be rather distant, on choppy seas, and, owing to their lengthy dives, give broken views. This bird, however, at close range on calm water, should present few difficulties to an observer familiar with at least three of the four West Palearctic species.



The steep forehead with two bumps on the crown is not consistent with the shallow sloping forehead and smoothly rounded crown of Red-throated Diver *G. stellata*. The bill is also far too heavy and deep-based for Red-throated, whose bill has much more of a stiletto-like profile, with a rounded, less-angled lower mandible, and that species often holds its bill and head angled upwards. Adult-winter Red-throateds have dark on the neck confined to a narrow strip down the hindneck, and reaching down to the level of the eye on the crown, and there is usually a white area in front of or right around the eye, often isolating it (though in certain lights they can look quite dark around the eye). Juveniles have dark streaking on the sides of the neck, but not the solid dark of the mystery bird, and many also show a dark (chestnut) patch on the upper foreneck; they also show a pale eye-ring, not the diffuse pale area of this bird. Red-throated's upperparts would also have a much more speckled appearance, rather than the scalloped effect seen here.

Black-throated Diver *G. arctica* is heavier in build than Red-throated, but again the bill is long and dagger-like and only rarely resembles that of the mystery bird; the crown is also usually smoothly rounded, but in some postures can approach that of the mystery bird. A characteristic feature of Black-throated in non-breeding plumage is the distribution of dark and light on the neck and head: in profile, the dividing line between the black and the white on the neck runs midway between throat and hindneck and is regular and sharply defined, producing a smart, clean appearance, again unlike our bird. In addition, the crown and hindneck tend to be paler than the rest of the



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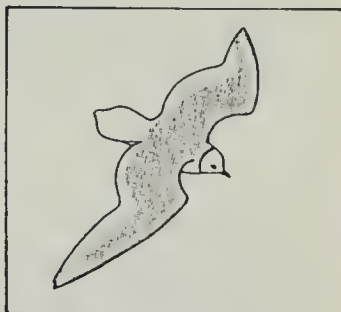
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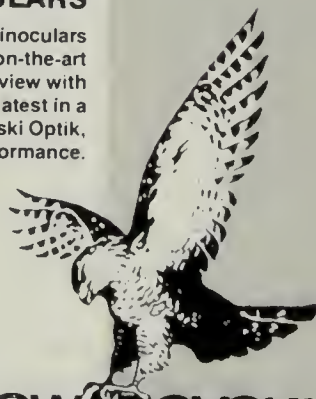
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upperparts on Black-throated, which also, when swimming, shows a white patch on the rear flanks; neither of these features is apparent here.

So, as most readers will have realised immediately, we are looking at a non-breeding-plumaged individual of one of the two largest diver species, White-billed *G. adamsii* and Great Northern *G. immer*. Both species, like the mystery bird, have a big, 'lumpy' head, with a heavy bill, and a broad, dark, broken half-collar on the lower foreneck. White-billed shows paler sides of neck, with a diffuse border between light and dark, and (especially juveniles) a dark car-coverts patch, and at long range appears to have a narrow darker area on the crown and hindneck. It usually holds its bill pointing upwards, like Red-throated, and rarely (if ever) as horizontally as on the mystery bird. It has a straight (adults) or very slightly decurved (juveniles) culmen, and, although it shows a darker area at the base of the culmen, often extending to just beyond the nostril, there is never any dark on the distal half of the bill, which is therefore mostly a pale ivory colour. Some Great Northern Divers (first-winters?), however, can also have a very pale bill, though the culmen is always dark.

The bird in the photograph shows a fairly obvious demarcation between light and dark on the sides of the neck, with an indentation of white into dark about halfway up the neck and, below this, thick, dark projections into the paler lower foreneck; its head is large, with a 'bump' at the top of the forehead and another at the rear crown/nape; and its bill is long, deep and powerful, with slightly decurved upper mandible and fairly well-marked gonydeal angle, greyish in colour, but with the full length of the culmen and the cutting edges dark. All these features combined are diagnostic of Great Northern Diver. The strongly scalloped upperparts of this bird identify it as a juvenile. It was photographed by J. D. Bakewell at Wet Dock, Ipswich, Suffolk, in December 1977.

SIMON COLENUIT

Green Edge, Chale Green, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 2JR

10. Mystery photograph 185. Identify the species. Answer next month





European news

This regular six-monthly feature summarises information for the whole of Europe and adjacent parts of the Western Palearctic to complement the records published in the annual reports of the British Birds Rarities Committee and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the periodic reports on scarce migrants in Britain and Ireland (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 85: 507-554; 84: 349-392; 85: 631-635).

Details of all recent records have been supplied by the official national correspondents (see list at end of this report), and relevant published records have also been extracted for earlier years from the major national journals.

These summaries aim to include all records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species; (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, even if common elsewhere in Europe.

This report includes records from 31 countries.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Records still awaiting formal ratification by national rarities committees are indicated by asterisks (*)

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* ITALY
Third record: 7th May 1989 (*Riv. ital. Orn.* 59: 270).

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* CANARY ISLANDS
First record: Tenerife in January 1991.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* MOROCCO
Largest-ever spring concentrations: 150 at Afenouric, Middle Atlas, on 26th April 1992, and 200 at Douyiet on 21st June 1992.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* DENMARK
First record: 19th July 1990 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 109-110; record in September 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 443, becomes second).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* SPAIN
Census: 10,972 ($\pm 2,653$) breeding pairs in Balearic Islands in 1991, most of them on Menorca ($10,075 \pm 2,453$).

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*

11. Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas* among Cory's Shearwaters *C. diomedea*, Israel, June 1992 (*Hadoram Shirhai*)



ISRAEL First record for the Western Palearctic: two or three in flock of 200-300 Cory's Shearwaters *C. diomedea* in Eilat from June to at least August 1992 (plate 11) (1981 record now rejected, Morgan & Shirihi, in press).

Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* SPAIN Census: 3,301 (\pm 1,174) breeding pairs of the race *mauretanicus* in Balearic Islands in 1991, most on Formentera (2,410 \pm 885).

European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* SPAIN Census: 2,912 (\pm 1,134) breeding pairs in Balearic Islands in 1991, most on Ibiza (2,786 \pm 1,120).

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* SWEDEN Rapid expansion: about 6,750 pairs bred in some 20 colonies in 1991 (increasing to about 8,000 pairs in 1992, according to preliminary data; cf. 4,830 pairs in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 84: 227).

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* ISRAEL First breeding for 40 years: a few pairs in north part of Jordan River in 1992 (cf. first breeding in Hungary in 1988 and recent increase in Moldova, *Brit. Birds* 85: 444).

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* DENMARK Presumed escape: 15th-16th, 20th-27th and 28th August 1989 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 85: 22; 86: 110). GERMANY Second and third records: 10th February 1990 and 4th November 1990, considered to be probably wild birds (*Limicola* 6: 157). NETHERLANDS Escape/vagrant: Nijkerkernauw, Flevoland & Gelderland, on 25th-30th October 1990. (Cf. other recent records in Austria, Israel, France and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 85: 6, 444.)

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* SWEDEN Slow increase: about 270 booming males in 1991, increase probably being due to mild winters (cf. 213 in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 84: 227).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* NETHERLANDS Continuing decrease: early estimate of one or two breeding pairs in 1992 (compared with up to 225 in 1960s and up to 30 in 1988-89).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* FRANCE Spring influx: small parties in many locations, with maximum of eight on étang du Lindre, Moselle, on 25th April 1992 (cf. influx into England, *Brit. Birds* 85: 642). New breeding locations outside Camargue: ten pairs in Dombes, Ain, nine pairs in Brenne, Indre, and two pairs in Charente-Maritime in 1992. ITALY Second and third breeding records: one or two pairs in heronry of Isolone di Oldenico, Vercelli, in May 1989 and 1990. LITHUANIA First record: Obelija Lake on 29th May 1971. POLAND First record: Police, near Szczecin, on

9th May 1992*.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* NETHERLANDS Breeding: four or five pairs, in Flevoland (two), Noordholland, Zuidholland and, perhaps, Friesland, in 1992.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* ICELAND First record: 13th July 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 22).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* MOROCCO Largest-ever winter concentration: 45-50 at Oued Massa estuary on 9th January 1992.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* AUSTRIA Resumption of breeding: at least 13 pairs at Lake Neusiedl in 1992 (none in 1990 and 1991, *Brit. Birds* 84: 2; 85: 445).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* DENMARK Status review: of 200 records of this species, out of more than 400 flamingo records during 1924-89, 35 records were of the Old World race *P. r. roseus*; 'except for a possibly wild second-year bird in 1933, when an invasion occurred in Switzerland, all birds are believed to be escapes' (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 123-127). FINLAND Recent records: adults at Hailuoto on 22nd August 1988, in Tenhola on 19th-21st September 1991 and near Rauma on 17th November 1991 (these and all earlier records now considered to be probable escapes: species now removed from Category A to Category D).

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor* DENMARK Status review: all four records regarded as relating to escapes (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 123-127). FRANCE Escape/vagrant: adult near Palavas-les-Flots, Hérault, on 2nd-3rd May 1992*. NETHERLANDS Escapes/vagrants: Mokkebank, Friesland, on 29th April 1990, and Kornwerdersand, Friesland, on 26th September 1990.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* LITHUANIA Second breeding record: nest with four juveniles on small pond in agricultural area near Baltic coast, Silutė District, in 1989 (first was on Nemunae Delta in 1965; cf. recent increase in Finland and breeding records in Estonia, Latvia and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 85: 445).

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* FAROE ISLANDS First nesting record: male paired with female Greylag Goose *A. anser* which laid clutch which did not hatch in May 1989; wild origin questioned (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 85: 36). UKRAINE First and second records: Vereshczyca River, Roztocza Reserve, L'viv Region, on 5th May 1989, and Svitaz Lake, Shack National Park, Volyn Region, on 16th June 1992.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* ICELAND Third record of nominate race: Thykkvibær, Rang., on 14th April 1990.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* FRANCE First and second breeding records in Camargue: pair bred successfully in 1991 and 1992.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* HUNGARY First record: adult on Rétszilás-fishponds on 29th February 1992* (origin uncertain).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* SWEDEN Rapid expansion: about 1,440 pairs bred in 1991, about 90% on small offshore islands on east coast of Gotland (cf. first breeding in 1975, 75 pairs by 1981, about 640 pairs by 1986, 880 pairs by 1987 and 1,030 pairs by 1989, *Brit. Birds* 82: 15; 83: 223).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* ICELAND First to third records of nominate race: 30th May to 2nd June 1986 and 17th September 1989 (*Bliki* 8: 23; 11: 38) and Álfanes, Gull., on 17th May 1990. Second record of Nearetic and East Siberian race *nigricans*: Álfanes, Gull., on 16th May to at least 23rd May 1992*.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* ESTONIA First record: two males at Puhtu, Läänemaa District, on 8th-10th May 1992* (probable escapes). NORWAY Vagrant: 10th April 1989 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 14: 141).

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* ICELAND Third record: male at Lindarbrekka í Berufði, S-Múl., on 10th May 1990.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* DENMARK First record: male at Vejlerne, NW-Jutland, on 3rd-11th April 1991*. FINLAND Seventh and eighth records: 22nd June 1990 (*Lintumies* 26: 248) and male in Liminka on 17th June 1991. FRANCE Sixth record since 1981: 28th-29th March 1987 (*Alauda* 56: 297). NORWAY Fourth and fifth records: 26th November to 15th December 1988 (and again 7th January to 29th April 1989) and 26th February 1989 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 14: 141).

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* DENMARK Presumed escape: 28th October 1988 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 83: 135). FINLAND Amendment: male in May 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 223) now considered to be probable escape; this species is removed from Category A to Category D. POLAND First record: adult male at Rewa, Puck Bay, on 18th-20th March 1992.

Common Teal *Anas crecca* NORWAY Fourth record of Nearetic race *carolinensis*: male at Male, Fræna, More & Romsdal, on 1st May 1990 (record on 16th April 1989, *Brit. Birds* 84: 228, was third, not fourth).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* ICELAND Seventeenth and eighteenth records: male on 5th January 1989 and pair on 10th-21st June 1989 (*Bliki* 11: 38).

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* BELGIUM Second and third records: 6th April to 3rd May 1986 and 1st-6th May 1989 (*Aves* 24: 138-139; 27: 86). DENMARK Seventh record: male at Vejlerne, NW-Jutland, on 21st April to 6th May 1992*. FINLAND Fifth record: 27th April to 7th May 1988 (individual on 7th May 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 323, becomes sixth; *Lintumies* 25: 257). FRANCE Fifth record since 1981: 17th January 1986 (*Alauda* 56: 297).

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* MOROCCO Probable second breeding record: about 20 pairs in active display with courtship and mating in marshes of Lower Loukkos Valley in 1992.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* ICELAND Fourteenth to sixteenth records: males at Kleifarvatn í Breiðdal, S-Múl., and at Slétta í Reyðarfirði, S-Múl., on 10th May 1990, and at Mývatn, S-Thing., on 11th May 1990. NETHERLANDS Twelfth record: 14th-22nd April and 5th May 1990 (*Dutch Birding* 14: 75). NORWAY Vagrants: 21st February 1982, 22nd-23rd December 1983, 2nd-4th April 1984, 10th April 1984, 3rd February 1985, 2nd March to 1st April 1986, 2nd March 1986, 16th March 1986, 28th March 1986 and 2nd October to 21st November 1987 (18 previous records: *Vår Fuglefauna* 11: 89; 13: 134).

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* LATVIA Third breeding record: nest on Lake Engure in summer 1992 (first and second were on same lake in 1972 and 1973).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* DENMARK Sixth to eighth records: 10th-14th November 1989, 9th April 1990 and 22nd October 1991 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 85: 23; 86: 112). NORWAY Vagrants: 21st January 1984, 20th May 1984, 6th September 1985, 20th December 1986, and 3rd-4th October 1987 (22 previous records: *Vår Fuglefauna* 10: 92; 11: 89).

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* FINLAND Amendment: 1987 record, *Brit. Birds* 82: 15, now considered to relate to probable escape; this species is removed from Category A to Category D. FRANCE Amendment: 1987 record, *Brit. Birds* 80: 323, considered to relate to possible escape (*Alauda* 56: 318).

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus* FINLAND Third record: male in Raisio on 10th-11th November 1991. All Finnish records now considered to be probable escapes; this species

is removed from Category A to Category D. NETHERLANDS Escape/vagrant: Den Dever, Noordholland, on 1st-2nd December 1990. NORWAY Third record: adult male at Kaldvellfjorden, Lillesand, Aust-Agder, during 20th-29th December 1989 (record during January-10th February 1991*, *Brit. Birds* 84: 228, will become fourth if accepted). SWEDEN Probable escapes: Lake Ymsen, Västergötland, on 21st-23rd March 1992 and Norberg, Västmanland, on 31st March to 10th April 1992.

Goosander *Mergus merganser* BELARUS Second breeding record: clutch in nest-box on Naroch Lakes, NW Minsk region, in May 1992 (first was in May 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 7).

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* NORWAY Third and fifth records: male on 6th-8th June 1987 and two males on 11th-18th June 1988 (records in May 1988, October 1988 and May 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224; 84: 4, 229, become fourth, sixth and seventh respectively); further records have followed, the eighth to sixteenth being during May 1989 to November 1991*.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* GERMANY Vagrant: 24th November 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 159).

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* FRANCE Northerly vagrant: Aisne département on 21st July 1992*.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 167 at Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 28th September 1991, arriving from Falsterbo, Sweden, about 25 km to ENE. SWEDEN Increase in Skåne: about 1,000 individuals at end of 1990 breeding season (most of Swedish population).

Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* POLAND Second and third records: adult at Cizżen, near Konin, on 30th March 1992* and immature at Jastarnia, Hel Peninsula, on 26th April 1992* (only previous European record noted in recent years was in the Netherlands in October 1976, *Brit. Birds* 72: 276).

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* FINLAND Best-ever breeding success: 73 fledglings in 1991. LITHUANIA Largest-ever breeding population: eight pairs, with two successfully breeding, in 1992 (first breeding, after long-term disappearance, in 1985; unsuccessful breeding in 1986; two nestlings in 1987; two in 1988; four in 1990; and one in 1991). (Cf. recolonisation of Czechoslovakia, *Brit. Birds* 82: 324.)

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus* NETHERLANDS Fifth and sixth records: 26th June 1989 and 31st July 1990 (*Dutch Birding* 14: 75; previous records were in 1907, 1959, 1979 and 1981).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* BELARUS First breeding-season record since 1940s: male near Babchin, Bragin district, Gomel region, on 28th May 1992. CANARY ISLANDS First record: adult male on Tenerife in March 1991. DENMARK Influx: nine at Skagen, N-Jutland, during May 1992, including three on 15th May*. GIBRALTAR First record: male on 23rd March 1992.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* GIBRALTAR Deletion: first and only record, on 22nd May 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 10, now rejected.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* SPAIN First confirmed record: adult at Delta del Llobregat, Barcelona, on 5th-22nd March 1990.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* DENMARK Fourth to sixth records: during 1st-21st October 1990 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 113) and at Skagen on 29th April to 2nd May 1991 and on 19th May 1991.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* DENMARK Highest-ever autumn count: 49 at Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 21st August 1991, arriving from Falsterbo, Sweden, about 25 km to ENE. LITHUANIA Census: about 20 pairs, with 15 pairs nesting and about five suspected nesting, in 1992 (nesting ceased in 1925, recommenced in 1968, but only two nests known as recently as 1980).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* DENMARK Largest-ever influx: 425-610 at Skagen, N-Jutland, in May-June 1992 (about 150 in rest of Denmark). FRANCE Influx: at least 60 in spring 1992. ICELAND First record: 28th-29th July 1980 (not 26th-27th July 1980, *Brit. Birds* 85: 447). NETHERLANDS Influx: more than 450 in second half of May 1992. SWEDEN 'Normal numbers' in spring 1992. (Cf. influx into Britain in spring 1992, *Brit. Birds* 85: 642-643.)

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* FRANCE High numbers: 'incredible total' of 21 together near Alès, Gard, from about 6th to 15th July 1992*.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* CANARY ISLANDS Census: seven pairs found in 1987-90.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* ISRAEL First breeding record: Hatzcva area, during April-May 1992.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* SWEDEN Decline: about 145 males in 1991 (cf. 129-312 during 1972-79, *Brit. Birds* 73: 575; *Vår Fågelv.* 39: 237-245).

Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* FRANCE First record since 1981: Ain on 14th September 1985 (*Alauda* 56: 302; cf. range ex-

pansion and reintroduction projects in Spain, and high numbers in Morocco, *Brit. Birds* 83: 11, 225).

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* FRANCE Escape/vagrant: Ardennes on 17th August 1987 (*Alauda* 56: 319).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* PORTUGAL Breeding population estimate: 1,200 pairs in 1990 (*Airo* 2(1): 10-11). SPAIN Census: 10,410-10,587 breeding pairs in 1989.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* SPAIN Census: 4,356-4,476 pairs in 1989.

Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* SWEDEN First record: Södsviken, Öland, on 26th May 1992*.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* SPAIN Census: 3,761-3,815 pairs in 1989.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* CYPRUS First record: at least one at Akhna Dam on 10th-20th November 1991 (cf. records in Israel and Morocco since 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 325; 85: 8).

Lesser Sand Plover/Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus/C. leschenaultii* FINLAND Vagrant: Pori on 10th August 1988 (first and second records of Greater Sand Plover were on 9th June 1964 and during 19th-22nd June 1971).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* HUNGARY First record: adult in breeding plumage near Fertorákos on 7th-14th July 1992*. NORWAY First and second records: 5th-7th August 1984 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 9: 245; not June 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 341), and 25th June 1985 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 14: 142).

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* ANDORRA Third record: juvenile on 30th July 1992, but breeding not confirmed.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* FINLAND Ninth and eleventh records: juvenile at Jurmo Bird Observatory on 13th September to 11th October 1990 (record at Närpiä in September 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 8, 448, becomes tenth), and Pori, Vyteri, on 25th June 1991. GERMANY Vagrant: Heligoland on 24th-29th August 1990 (*Limicola* 4: 323; 6: 160). NETHERLANDS Tenth to twelfth records: 8th November 1990 (first since 1939, *Dutch Birding* 14: 75), Middelburg, Zeeland, on 13th-18th September 1991, and Texel, Noordholland, on 20th September to 5th October 1991.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: adult on Grand Canary in September 1991, juvenile on Tenerife in November/December 1991, and adult on Tenerife in May 1992. FRANCE Third

record: 10th December 1986 to 9th January 1987 (*Alauda* 56: 302; fourth was in July 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 17). ICELAND Sixth record: 8th October 1984 (not 8th August 1984, *Brit. Birds* 85: 448). NORWAY First and second records: 19th June 1985 and 27th-29th June 1986 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 10: 93; 11: 90).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* ICELAND Third record: Fuglavík á Miðnesi, Gull., on 5th October 1991* (not Hafurbjarnastadir on 15th October 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 449). NORWAY Second record: adult at Revtingen, Klepp, Rogaland, on 30th June to 2nd July 1991*.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* FINLAND First record: Kemiö, Sjöfax, on 1st June 1991. SWEDEN Sixth record: Hargsviken, Uppland, 24th July 1992*.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* NORWAY Deletion: record on 9th June 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 225) now rejected.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* DENMARK Eighth record: 28th July 1990 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 113). GERMANY Vagrant: 16th-20th May 1990 (*Limicola* 4: 225; 6: 160). ICELAND Correction: three in 1983, on 16th July, 16th-30th October and 23rd October, and one in 1984, on 14th October (*Bliki* 4: 24-25; 5: 30), not five in 1983 and two in 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 150). NORWAY Sixth record: adult at Vadso, Finnmark, on 20th-30th July 1990*. SWEDEN Seventh and eighth records: Ottenby, Öland, on 18th July to 8th August 1992* and Måkläppen, Skåne, on 27th July 1992*.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* GERMANY Deletion: 1984 record (*Limicola* 5: 198; *Brit. Birds* 85: 450) now rejected.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* BELGIUM Vagrant: 9th August 1985 (*Aves* 23: 161). DENMARK Thirteenth and fourteenth records: 30th May 1990 and 10th June 1990 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 113). FAROE ISLANDS Second record: 23rd-24th October 1987 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 82: 104). FINLAND Vagrants: two in 1985, both on 25th May; three in 1986, in April, July and August; one in October 1987; three in 1989, in April, June and September; and one from 24th to 27th September 1990 (15 previous records; *Lintumies* 21: 274; 22: 201; 23: 190; 25: 260; 26: 252). GERMANY Vagrants: four in 1990, one in July-August, two in September and one in October (*Limicola* 6: 160). ICELAND Vagrants: two records in 1990. NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 31st July 1990 (38 previous records; *Dutch Birding*

14: 76). NORWAY. Vagrants: 25th-27th May 1985, 14th-17th May 1985, 8th June 1985, 17th-19th June 1985, 18th June 1985, 25th May 1987, 11th July 1987, 19th July 1987, 20th July 1987, 19th-20th August 1988, 23rd May 1989 and 23rd June 1990 (25 previous records: *Vår Fuglefauna* 10: 93; 11: 90; 12: 104; 15: 145). SWEDEN Vagrants: three in 1991, on 20th May, 18th-20th July and 27th September (57 previous records: *Vår Fågelv.* (1991): 21).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* SWEDEN Fifth record: Lake Hullsjön, Västergötland, on 20th July 1992*.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* LITHUANIA First to third records: two on 26th August 1989, two on 21st August 1990 and two on 22nd August 1990, all six caught on Kuršių Marios.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* FINLAND Seventh and eighth records: juveniles in Liperi on 13th September 1991 and in Joensuu on 28th September to 5th October 1991. FRANCE Vagrants: three in August-September 1987 (26 previous individuals since 1981; *Alauda* 56: 304). NETHERLANDS Sixth record: 19th-20th May 1986 (October 1988 record, *Brit. Birds* 85: 450, becomes seventh; *Dutch Birding* 14: 76). NORWAY Vagrants: 16th May 1985, 20th May 1985, 20th-30th May 1987, 25th July 1987 and 5th-6th August 1989 (ten previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna* 10: 93; 11: 90; 12: 104; 14: 143).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* FINLAND Sixth record: Kotka/Vehkalahti on 4th-6th May 1991. NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 1st-6th January 1990; and Lauwersmeer individual of July 1987, May 1988 and May 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 451) reappeared on 7th-12th May 1990 (*Dutch Birding* 14: 76).

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* GREECE Single at Tsoukalio Lagoon, Amvrakikos, on 14th April 1988. (We are publishing all records received of this species.)

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* FAROE ISLANDS First confirmed breeding records: two pairs on Eysturoy in 1989 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 85: 37; cf. breeding in northeast Iceland in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 85: 451).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* SWEDEN First breeding record: several records and one breeding attempt (probably unsuccessful) at Lake Kvismaren, Närke, in April-May 1992* (cf. recent increases or range expansions in Finland, Latvia and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 84: 6, 230).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* GERMANY Second record: 2nd November 1990 to 1st January 1991 (*Limicola* 5: 89; 6: 161). SWEDEN Fifth record: Visingsö, Småland, on 9th-14th June 1992*.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* GERMANY Vagrant: Heligoland on 27th October 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 161). ICELAND Third and fourth records: Arfadalsvík í Grindavík, Gull., on 15th September 1990 and Sandgerði, Gull., on 2nd-6th November 1991*.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* BELGIUM Vagrant: 8th September 1985 (*Aves* 23: 162). Tenth and eleventh records: adult females at Zeebrugge, West-Vlaanderem, on 6th-7th May 1990*, and at Kallo, Oost-Vlaanderem, on 19th-20th May 1990* (first and second were in June 1979 and September 1980, *Brit. Birds* 74: 261). FRANCE Vagrants: six individuals in June-September 1987 (*Alauda* 56: 306). SWEDEN Seventh record: Fatburen, Dalarna, on 17th-19th May 1991*.

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccornicki* ISRAEL Second record: Eilat on 28th June 1992 (cf. first Egyptian record in June 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 452).

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* GREECE Fourth record: second-year in Alexandroupolis on 30th April 1983 (record in June 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 288; 80: 325, becomes fifth). HUNGARY First record: second-summer on the Hortobágy on 1st June to 10th July 1992*. LITHUANIA First record: 20th June 1988 (*Acta Orn. Lituanica* 4: 85).

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* BELARUS Second and third breeding records: male and two females near nest with five eggs in colony of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* on Vileika Reservoir, NW Minsk region, end of May 1992, and nest in mixed gull colony on Tremlya fish-ponds, Petrikov district, Gemcl region, at end of May 1992 (first was in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 226).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* FRANCE Thirteenth record: first-summer in baic de Seine, Seine-Maritime, on 12th April to 14th July 1992*.

Little Gull *Larus minutus* SWEDEN Record numbers of migrants in spring 1992 (cf. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, Black Tern *C. niger* and White-winged Black Tern *C. leucopterus*).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* HUNGARY First record: adult in breeding plumage on the Hortobágy-fishponds on 3rd-7th May 1992. SWEDEN Second record: Furilden Island, Gotland, on 16th-22nd May 1992*.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* BELGIUM See Netherlands. FRANCE Influx in winter 1991/92 and spring 1992: about 30 individuals, with one adult in Paris in January-March. ICELAND See Norway. NETHERLANDS Second record: near Achmaal, Noordbrabant, on 18th-19th April 1992 (same individual at Nieuwmoer, Antwerp, Belgium, on same dates). NORWAY Ninth to eleventh records: 23rd November 1989 to about 29th April 1990, 11th January to 9th March 1990 and 30th-31st December 1990 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 15: 146). Ringing recovery in Iceland: Bergen individual, first reported as second Norwegian record in October 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 288) and seen during October to April each winter from 1984/85 to 1988/89, was shot at Heimey, Iceland, on 25th April 1990.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Correction: 1990 record (*Brit. Birds* 85: 452) was first breeding in Czech Republic and second for Czechoslovakia (first for Czechoslovakia was in Slovakia in 1983).

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* GERMANY Third and fourth records: 8th January 1990 and 4th March 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 163).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* ICELAND First record: 21st April 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 31). SPAIN Census: 1,869 pairs in 1989.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* SWEDEN Slow decline: 400-450 pairs in 1991 (down from a high of about 900 pairs in 1971).

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* CANARY ISLANDS Highest-ever numbers: 1,600 migrants on Fuerteventura in March 1992.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* CANARY ISLANDS Largest-ever concentration: 1,200 migrants on Fuerteventura in March 1992.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: two on Fuerteventura in March 1992.

Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum* SPAIN Deletion: record in September 1988 not accepted (*Brit. Birds* 83: 13).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* AUSTRIA Unusually high numbers: Seewinkel, Burgenland, in spring 1992 (at least 14 on 6th May). ICELAND First record: 24th April to 24th May 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 32). LATVIA Second record and first breeding record: five successful nests at Nagli fish-ponds in summer 1992. POLAND Best-ever breeding season: about 130 pairs in 1992. SWEDEN Second to fifth records: 11th May 1990, 15th September 1990 (*Vår Fågelv.* 50(8): 23), four on Lake Krankesjön, Skåne, on 21st May 1992* and Falsterbo, Skåne, on 28th

May 1992* (cf. record numbers of Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Black Tern *C. niger* and White-winged Black Tern *C. leucopterus* in spring 1992).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* SWEDEN Record numbers of migrants: in spring 1992 (cf. Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Whiskered Tern *C. hybridus* and White-winged Black Tern *C. leucopterus*).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* DENMARK Influx: about ten in May-June 1992*. FRANCE Small influx: at least 40 individuals in May 1992. ICELAND Second record: adult at Þórshöfn á Langanesi, N-Thing., on 28th June 1989. NORWAY Ninth to eleventh records: 24th July 1988*, 5th May 1990 and 13th-14th August 1990. POLAND Best-ever breeding season: about 1,000 pairs, mainly in northeast, in 1992. SWEDEN Minor invasion and third 'mixed' breeding record: at least 23 in May 1992* with one staying to breed with Black Tern *C. niger* at Lake Tåkern, Östergötland (no record of breeding by 'pure' pair of *leucopterus*) (cf. record numbers of Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Black Tern *C. niger* and Whiskered Tern *C. hybridus* in spring 1992).

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrthaptes paradoxus* FINLAND Seventh record: one flying west in Kuusamo on 10th June 1992 (previous records were two in 1863, two in 1888 and two in 1969).

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* GREECE First and second records: Spetses island on 18th September 1948 and Kiato on 22nd April 1963 (specimens recently discovered in private collections).

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* FINLAND Amendment: records at Raippaluoto on 14th June 1972 and Lohtaja on 2nd November 1969 now considered to be probable escapes; this species is removed from Category A to Category D. FRANCE Escape/vagrant: male singing at Wissant, Pas-de-Calais, from beginning of April to at least 10th May 1992*. SWEDEN Presumed escape: 17th-24th August 1989 (*Vår Fågelv.* 50(8): 28).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* FRANCE Northerly breeding record: juvenile being fed by two Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* at La Faute s/Mer, Vendée, on 16th-25th July 1992*. MOROCCO Second breeding record: fledglings in Sous Valley, near Aoulouz, on 22nd April 1992 (first was in 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 7).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 800-1,200 pairs in 1985-89 (400-700 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 453).

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 900-1,300 pairs in 1985-89 (600-950 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 453). NETHERLANDS Second and third records away from southeastern province of Limburg: Beetsterzwaag, Friesland, on 9th February 1992 and Ermelo & Nunspeet, Gelderland, on 5th and 12th May 1992.

Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 1,500-2,100 pairs in 1985-89 (900-1,300 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 453). HUNGARY Second record: near Aggtelek, northeast Hungary, on 25th February 1992.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 1,500-2,100 pairs in 1985-89 (700-1,100 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 453).

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 8,500-12,000 pairs in 1985-89 (6,000-9,000 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 453).

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 400-500 pairs in 1985-89 (1-5 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 454).

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 6,500-10,000 pairs in 1985-89 (4,000-7,000 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 454).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 15-30 pairs in 1985-89 (up to five in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 454).

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Census total: 850-1,300 pairs in 1985-89 (550-800 in Bohemia and Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 85: 454).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* EGYPT First breeding record: about 20 individuals nesting at Sad El Rawafa, north Sinai, on 10th June 1989 (*Courser* 3: 62).

Little Swift *Apus affinis* CYPRUS First record: single in flock of Common Swifts *A. apus* at Paphos Lighthouse on 28th April 1992.

Smyrna Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* EGYPT Breeding-range expansion: pair probably breeding near Rafah on 9th June 1989, and at least 12 breeding pairs at Gebel Asfar in spring 1990 (first noted in 1985, when two pairs at Gebel Asfar; *Courser* 3: 63).

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* DENMARK Best-ever year: about 55 (35 at Skagen, N-Jutland) in May-June 1992. FAROE ISLANDS First record: visited ship on Faro Bank, southwest of the islands, on 7th June 1992*.

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus* CANARY ISLANDS First record: Tenerife in March 1990.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* UKRAINE First record in Western Ukraine: adult at Shack National Park, Volyn Region, on 11th July 1992.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* SWEDEN Effectively extinct: a few individuals still reported, but no breeding recorded since 1989 (cf. declines in the Netherlands and western Germany and extinction in Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 85: 10).

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* CYPRUS First record: single of race *penicillata* in Paphos Lighthouse area on 13th May 1992.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* DENMARK Date correction: second record was during 8th-12th November 1990 (not 7th-11th November 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 232).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* BELGIUM Vagrants: 14th-20th October 1984, 18th October 1987, two on 10th-11th November 1987, 1st October 1988 and 2nd-3rd October 1988 (*Aves* 23: 163; 26: 10; 27: 21). DENMARK Vagrants: seven in 1990 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 115). FINLAND Vagrants: 14 in September-October 1990 (cf. 26 in 1987, 53 in 1988, and 9 in 1989; *Lintumies* 23: 191; 25: 264; 26: 254-255). GERMANY Vagrants: 16 during September-December 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 166).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* ESTONIA First record: Kirikuküla, Läänemaa District, on 24th April 1992*. FINLAND Tenth and twelfth records: 30th September 1990 (individual on 30th October 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 11, becomes eleventh; *Lintumies* 26: 255) and Lågskär Bird Observatory on 4th October 1990. GERMANY Eighth to tenth records: three on Heligoland, on 27th September to 1st October 1990, 4th October 1990 and 12th October 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 166). NORWAY Tenth and fourteenth to sixteenth records: 14th-15th October 1984, 1st-7th October 1990, 20th October 1990 and 29th-30th October 1990 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 15: 147).

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* FRANCE Largest-ever annual total: 73 individuals (71 in April-May, singly in September and October) in 1987 (*Alauda* 56: 311).

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* ICELAND First breeding record: southeast Iceland in 1989 (*Blíki* 11: 50).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* GERMANY Vagrants: 16th September 1990 and 24th-27th September 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 166). HUNGARY

Second and third records: first-summer male near Fertőrákos on 6th May 1992* and adult male on Hortobágy-fishponds on 14th May 1992*. LITHUANIA Highest-ever breeding numbers: in 1992, three pairs in bog Žuvintas and three pairs in bog Čepkeliai, a new breeding site. NORWAY Nineteenth and twentieth records: 9th September 1990 and 13th-16th October 1990 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 15: 148). SWEDEN Mixed breeding: male bred with probable Yellow *M. flava* × Citrine Wagtail hybrid in Västmanland and, nearby, probable male Yellow × Citrine hybrid with female Yellow Wagtail in 1992* (probably from mixed Citrine × Yellow Wagtail breeding in same area in 1991).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* HUNGARY First record of race *jarrellii* in breeding plumage on the Hortobágy on 8th April 1992*.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* ICELAND Small influx: October-November 1990 (cf. irruptions into Britain & Ireland, Denmark and Ukraine, *Brit. Birds* 85: 11).

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* DENMARK Presumed escape: adult male with worn tail found dead about 20th November 1990 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 115).

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Rapid increase in Czech Republic: 90-140 breeding pairs of white-spotted race *L. s. cyaneola* in Bohemia, and 40-50 breeding pairs of red-spotted race *L. s. svecica* in Krkonoše Mountains, during 1985-89. HUNGARY First record of race *svecica*: netted near Fertőrákos on 26th-28th May 1992* (*L. s. cyaneola* breeds commonly in Hungary).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* HUNGARY First record of eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*: female near Kardoskut on 29th March 1992*.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* FINLAND Fifth record: 15th-20th April 1989 (*Lintumies* 25: 265).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* GERMANY Vagrants: Heligoland on 24th June 1990 and 3rd-6th October 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 166).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* SWEDEN Third record: 30th September to 1st October 1990 (*Vår Fågelv.* 50(8): 25); record on 5th-7th October 1975 reconsidered and now accepted as first record of Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*, so records in June 1986 and October 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 20; 83: 228) are now first and second, not second and third.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 1,350 at Vejlerne, NW-Jutland, on 22nd April 1992.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* NORWAY Twelfth and thirteenth records of black-throated race *atrogularis*: 17th October 1986 and 10th-12th November 1990 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 11: 91; 15: 149; there are also three earlier records of individuals showing characters of race *T. r. ruficollis*).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* FINLAND Thirteenth record: singing male at Tarvasjoki on 11th-15th July 1991.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* NETHERLANDS Increase: thirteenth to eighteenth records of singing individuals during May-June in 1990 and 1991 (cf. range expansion in Germany, and increases in Finland, Norway and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 77: 240; 81: 337; 83: 228).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* SWEDEN First breeding record: Herkulesviken, Lake Hammarsjön, Skåne, in 1992.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* GERMANY Vagrant: 5th September 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 167).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* BELGIUM First record: 8th September 1989 (*Aves* 27: 92). DENMARK Third record: Christiansø, Bornholm, on 4th June 1992*. FINLAND Seventh, eleventh and twelfth records: one ringed at Höytiäinen, near Joensuu, on 24th May 1988, one ringed in Helsinki on 28th July 1989, and one at Långskär Bird Observatory on 17th-18th July 1990 (seventh to ninth, all in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 15, become eighth to tenth). First breeding record: four first-autumn birds in post-juvenile moult ringed in Halikko during 10th-18th August 1991.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* GERMANY Third record: 15th August 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 167). MALTA Second record: one ringed in August 1992 (first was in October 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 234).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* GERMANY Vagrant: Heligoland on 17th September 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 168).

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* DENMARK First and third records: 20th August 1978 and 1st June 1990 (second was on 11th-22nd June 1982; *Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 116). ICELAND First record: 4th October 1987 (*Bliki* 8: 38).

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* SWEDEN Second record: 6th June 1990 (*Vår Fågelv.* 50(8): 26).

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* FRANCE Third record since 1981: 19th October 1987 (*Aulauda* 56: 313).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* DENMARK First successful breeding: pair reared four young in 1990 (a pair built a nest but failed to lay in 1985; *Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 116). Large influx: about 50-60 in May-June 1990*. GERMANY First successful breeding: pair reared two young on Heligoland (*Limicola* 6: 168). SPAIN First record: juvenile on Columbretes Islands, off Castellón de la Plana, on 6th September 1988.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* BELGIUM Vagrants: 15th-17th November 1985, 2nd-4th November 1986, 16th-17th November 1986 and 6th-11th November 1987 (*Aves* 24: 146; 26: 11). FAROE ISLANDS First record: 17th October 1987 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 82: 105). FINLAND Vagrants: four in October 1990 (cf. 28 in 1986, 18 in 1987, 30 in 1988 and 47 in 1989; *Lintumies* 22: 203; 23: 193; 26: 257). GERMANY Vagrants: 14th-15th October 1990 and 3rd December 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 168). NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 3rd-4th November 1990 (*Dutch Birding* 14: 83). NORWAY Vagrants: 31st October 1987, three on 22nd October 1989, 27th October 1989 and 6th October 1990 (35 previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna* 14: 145; 15: 149).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* BELGIUM Vagrants: 12 in September-November 1985, at least 11, but impossible to determine precise numbers, in 1986, six in 1987 and about 18 in 1988 (*Aves* 23: 164-165; 24: 145-146; 26: 11; 27: 24). DENMARK Vagrants: eight in 1990 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 116). FAROE ISLANDS Vagrants: two on 20th October 1987, one remaining on 21st, 6th October 1988 and 22nd October 1988 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 82: 105; 85: 38). FINLAND Vagrants: 21 in 1986, 25 in 1987, 66 in 1988 and 14 in 1989 (*Lintumies* 22: 203; 23: 193-194; 25: 268). Fourth and fifth records of race *humei*: Söderskär on 20th May 1991 (first spring record) and Vehkalahti on 8th-10th October 1991. GERMANY First record of race *humei*: Heligoland on 5th-7th November 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 168). Vagrants: eight during September-October 1990 (*Limicola* 6: 168-169).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* BELGIUM Second and third records: 31st October to 2nd November 1987 and 23rd October 1989 (*Aves* 26: 11; 27: 92; fourth was in October 1990. *Brit. Birds* 85: 13, 460). DENMARK Fifth record: 9th October 1986 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 82: 94-95; sixth and seventh already noted, as fourth and sixth, *Brit. Birds* 80: 328; 81: 338). FINLAND Ninth record: Kristinankaupunki, Skaftung, on 5th-8th October 1991. UKRAINE First record: Tarchancut,

Krym Region, on 7th October 1989.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* BELGIUM Fourth and eighth records: 3rd-4th October 1986 (*Aves* 24: 144-145) and one trapped, De Haan, West-Vlaanderen, on 11th-15th November 1990*. DENMARK Fourteenth record: Snejsrup, Thy, N-Jutland, on 19th October 1990 (if ten individuals during autumn 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 460, are accepted: total will be 24). FINLAND Vagrants: 9th October 1988, 14th-16th October 1988 and three in October 1990 (21 previous records; *Lintumies* 24: 253; 26: 258). NETHERLANDS Eleventh to thirteenth records: 25th October 1989, 25th October 1990 and 29th November to 4th December 1990 (*Dutch Birding* 14: 83). PORTUGAL First record: 18th November 1990 (*Airo* 3(1): 21-24).

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus* SWEDEN First record: Landsort Island, Södermanland, on 19th October 1991*.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* FINLAND Fourth to sixth records: 11th April 1989, 9th May 1989, and 8th June 1990 (third was in May 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 16; *Lintumies* 25: 269; 26: 258).

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* MALTA Ninth and tenth records: two ringed in April 1992.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* LITHUANIA First record: near Rudnia, Varėna District, on 27th June to 3rd July 1983.

Bearded Tit *Parus biarmicus* NORWAY Sixth and seventh records: three males on 8th December 1989 and one male on 10th April 1990 (fifth was in July 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 228). Influxes: eight records involving about 46 individuals during September 1990 to April 1991* and three records involving 21 individuals during November-December 1991. LATVIA Recovery: after decrease during 1976-89, now remarkable increase and extending eastwards.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* BELGIUM Vagrant: 27th October 1985 (*Aves* 23: 165).

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* FAROE ISLANDS First record: 23rd July 1986 (*Dansk Om. Foren. Tidsskr.* 82: 106).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* SPAIN Continuing expansion: first nest in southernmost province, Cádiz, in February 1990 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 81: 338).

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* BELGIUM Influx: five in October-November 1985 (*Aves* 23: 165-166; cf. irruptions into Denmark, Finland and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 79: 291).

Yellow-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

GIBRALTAR Fourth record: flock of 18 flew in from Morocco across the Strait and headed north over the Rock on 25th April 1992 (third record was flock of seven on 28th April 1987 which also crossed the Strait and flew north).

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* ICELAND Small influx: early November 1990.

White-shouldered Starling *Sturnus sinensis* FINLAND Presumed escape: 16th May 1990 (*Lintumies* 26: 260).

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* PORTUGAL Second record: adult in mixed flock of Common Starlings *S. vulgaris* and Spotless Starlings *S. unicolor* on small rocky island near Carrapateira, Algarve, on 28th December 1991* (first was adult shot on Entroncamento, Santarém, on 3rd January 1965).

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* MOROCCO Southern extension in western Sahara: after Layoune (*Brit. Birds* 80: 14), first sighted at El-Argoub and Dakhla (former Villa Cisneros) in June 1988 and regularly up to at least spring 1992.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* NETHERLANDS Third and fourth records: trapped, Vlieland, Friesland, on 24th September 1991* and on 2nd October 1991*.

Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus* CYPRUS Second record: single in flock of about 100 European Serins *S. serinus* at Akrotiri on 18th March 1992 (first record was in 1973; one in 1968 was possibly an escape and singles reported in 1971 and 1978 were inadequately documented, Flint & Stewart 1992, *The Birds of Cyprus*; cf. occurrence in Suffolk in spring 1992, *Brit. Birds* 85: 645).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 24,000 at Gilleleje, Zealand, on 22nd April 1992. FAROE ISLANDS First and second confirmed breeding records: following marked increase in records since 1980, breeding proved in 1985 and 1988 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 85: 39).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis horreumanni* LITHUANIA First record: 3rd December 1985. Influx: flock of 25 in Varėna on 26th February 1989 (*Acta Orn. Lituanica* 4: 88; cf. largest-ever influx to Poland in winter 1988/89, *Brit. Birds* 83: 16).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* BELGIUM First record of singing male: in Hainaut on 18th-19th June 1988 (*Aves* 27: 25). FRANCE Continuing spread: individuals (probably three to five) singing in Pas-de-Calais and Nord départements in May and June 1992*. NETHERLANDS Continuing increase in 1992: early estimates of about 15 breeding pairs on

Terschelling, Friesland, 13 on Schiermonnikoog, Friesland, 12 in Flevoland and five on Texel, Noordholland (cf. *Brit. Birds* 85: 461).

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Vagrant: 10th September 1985 (*Zprávy ČSO* 34: 37). DENMARK Correction: four records of seven birds during November-December 1990 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 84: 235).

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* FINLAND Amendment: only record, on 25th-27th April 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 11, 235, plate 132), now considered to be probable escape; this species is removed from Category A. SWEDEN First record: Toro Island, Södermanland, on 1st-3rd May 1992*, but considered probably to be an escape.

Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria* FAROE ISLANDS Escape: Midvág on 19th May 1992* (certainly not a Faroese cage-bird, but can only be regarded as an escape from captivity; cf. record in Sweden in May 1981, considered to be an escape, *Brit. Birds* 75: 29).

Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata* SWEDEN Presumed escape: 15th-17th May 1990 (*Vår Fågelv.* 50(8): 28; cf. Norwegian records in June 1989 and April 1990, and Fair Isle occurrence in June 1992, *Brit. Birds* 85: 646, plate 298).

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* PORTUGAL First record: three with flock of Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* at Cabo Espichel, Extremadura, on 12th October 1990, one remaining until 15th October (*Airo* 3(1): 21-24).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* BELGIUM Vagrant: 9th November 1987 (*Aves* 26: 13). FINLAND Second record: 8th-9th November 1986 (*Lintumies* 22: 204; third was in April 1988, already noted, *Brit. Birds* 82: 354). NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 1st November 1990 (20 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 14: 85). NORWAY Sixth and seventh records: 7th March 1988 and 6th July 1988 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 13: 138).

Girl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* NETHERLANDS Third record and first since 1901: on passage at Breskens, Zeeland, on 16th May 1992*.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* FINLAND Amendment: first and only record, on 20th-27th May 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 22), now considered to be probable escape; this species is removed from Category A.

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* CYPRUS First record: Amathus area, near Limassol, on 5th May 1991.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* EGYPT

Second record: El Gorah, north Sinai, on 11th May 1982 (first was in April 1928; *Courser* 1: 44-46).

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans* FINLAND First record: male ringed at Hanko Bird Observatory on 22nd April 1991 (considered to relate to probable escape).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First record: 31st March 1986 (*Žprávy ČSO* 34: 38).

Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena* DENMARK Presumed escape: 11th February to 7th April 1990 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 86: 118). NOR-

WAY Presumed escapes: 15th May 1988 and about 15th August 1990 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 13: 138; 15: 151; three previous records).

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* NORWAY Presumed escape: 9th-10th August 1986 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 13: 138).

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* ICELAND First record: 23rd-24th July 1983 (not 23rd-24th April 1980, *Brit. Birds* 85: 462).

Northern Oriole *Icterus galbula* NORWAY First record: 13th May 1986 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 11: 92).

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No information was received from Albania, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, or Switzerland.



Requests

Rare breeding birds Observers with any outstanding information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1992 are requested to send full details *now* to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Robert Spencer, Iredale Place Cottage, Loweswater, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0SU).

Photographs needed please For forthcoming papers, we need original colour transparencies, colour prints or black-and-white prints of the following species:

Madeira Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* (ID, preferably in flight)
 Cape Verde Petrel *P. feae* (ID, preferably in flight)
 Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis* (ID, preferably in flight)
 Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* (ID of ♀♀/immatures)
 White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (ID of ♀♀/immatures)
 Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (ID, all plumages)
 Gyr Falcon *F. rusticolus* (ID, all plumages)
 Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (ID, all ages)
 American Golden Plover *P. dominica* (ID, all ages)
 Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (in Britain)
 Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (portraits and interesting behaviour)
 Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (portraits and interesting behaviour)
 Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* (portraits and interesting behaviour)

PLEASE NOTE THE
 'ANNOUNCEMENT' ON
 PAGE 28

Please send transparencies and prints to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 13th November 1992 to 3rd January 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Argal Reservoir, Falmouth (Cornwall), from at least 27th November to at least 3rd January; Druridge Pool, near Cresswell (Northumberland), 2nd December to at least 3rd January.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* River Itchen, Southampton (Hampshire), 16th November to 6th December.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Hatch Pond, Poole (Dorset), at least 5th December; the male at Oxford Island, Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh), still present to 3rd January.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* White-phase, Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 22nd December to at least 1st January.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Two, Northam Burrows (Devon), 6th December, one staying to 9th December.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Fresco (Scilly), 14th-15th November.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* Winspit (Dorset), 14th-15th November.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* Harlyn Bay (Cornwall), 14th-20th December.

Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli* Titchwell (Norfolk), 22nd November.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* Willingham Woods, Market Rasen (Lincolnshire), 5th December to at least 3rd January.

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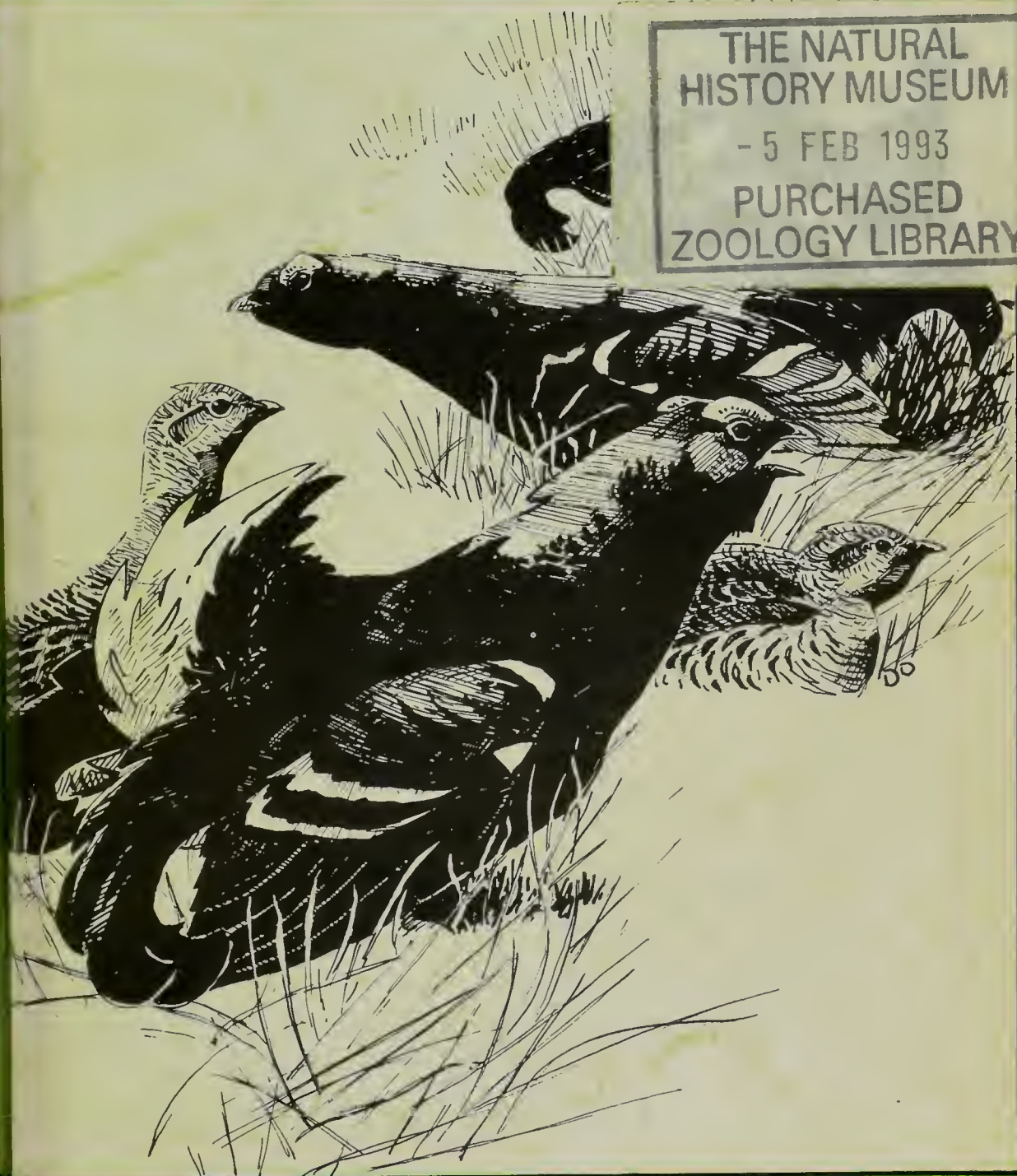
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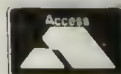
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British Birds

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A communal roost of Peregrine Falcons and other raptors

G. M. Kelly and J. P. Thorpe

Communal roosting is not common among most diurnal raptor species in Britain, although the winter roosting aggregations of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* are well known (e.g. Watson 1977; Clarke 1990; Clarke & Watson 1990). Since there appear to be no published reports of communal roosting by Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* (Ratcliffe 1980), this paper documents our observations of a communal roost on the Isle of Man. For obvious reasons, we do not wish to give information on the location beyond that it is on the Isle of Man; nor, for the same reasons, do we intend to give much description of the physical features of the roost or details of the geography of the roost area, other than stating that the site is more or less surrounded on most sides by open country and that dozens of alternative roost sites exist in the general area.

The roost was first observed in 1989, and was studied in more detail in 1990. For Peregrines in Britain it is highly unusual, because the birds settle in

a stand of large (about 20-m-high), mature conifers and also because numbers of other raptor species and Common Ravens *Corvus corax* roost with the Peregrines. The site is used mainly from late August until about the beginning of December, although occasional individuals can be seen going to roost there at various times throughout the winter. Through the autumn, daily numbers appear relatively constant: with, typically, about five Peregrines (maximum observed nine), up to about five Common Kestrels *F. tinnunculus*, about four (but up to six) Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and a maximum of 17 Common Ravens, all roosting in the same group of trees; on some nights, up to two Merlins *F. columbarius* also joined the roost. These numbers should not be taken to be strictly accurate, however, since the impossibility of observing the roost area from all angles makes it probable that some individuals, particularly of the smaller raptors, entered without being seen; totals may therefore be underestimated.

The smaller species generally approach the wood fast and low and shoot up into the branches as they reach the trees. The Peregrines, in contrast, frequently circle high above the site before going in to roost, and often give communal acrobatic displays high over the trees; individuals sometimes remain in the air for up to about 20 minutes, five being the greatest number seen over the roost at any one time. Interactions consist mainly of mutual circling and feinting attacks on each other, while individuals occasionally make apparently non-serious stoops at or set off in pursuit of Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus* or other species entering the area. Once a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* (of the 'hooded' race *corix*) was killed by one of the Peregrines, but was discarded without any attempt to eat it. On one occasion, an adult female Peregrine was observed repeatedly and aggressively driving away a juvenile which persisted in trying to roost with it; the juvenile finally went in to roost on the other side of the site. The Common Ravens mostly fly in in typically ponderous fashion a little above treetop height and ignore, and are ignored by, the Peregrines.

This communal roosting behaviour is apparently previously unknown for Peregrines, and, indeed, the species is described by Cramp & Simmons (1980) as being 'Markedly non gregarious at all times.' Communal roosting by Merlins appears to be widespread in some wintering areas (Dickson 1973; Cramp & Simmons 1980; Clarke 1992a). Witherby *et al.* (1943) mentioned several adult Common Kestrels roosting together, and similar behaviour by Eurasian Sparrowhawks, although unknown until recently (see Cramp & Simmons 1980; Newton 1986), has now been observed at a few sites (Clarke 1992b). The sharing of sites by Merlins and Hen Harriers is common, and has also been reported for Merlins and Eurasian Sparrowhawks (Clarke 1992a, b). Common Ravens, like most crow species, are frequently gregarious.

Because of the viewing distances and the generally poor light by the time the birds enter the roost area, we have been unable to ascertain on all occasions the precise age/sex composition of the group of Peregrines at the roost. The maximum numbers observed preclude those concerned being a single family party, but the apparent loose associations of pairs of adults with certain younger birds indicate that two or more family parties may be involved. The roosting, and particularly the nesting, of Peregrines in trees is almost unknown in Britain, although both have occurred in Scotland (authors' observations)

and are not uncommon elsewhere in Europe. It may be of significance that the stand of trees in which the Peregrines roost on the Isle of Man conforms very closely with a description of the sites preferred by the species for tree nesting in Germany (Fischer 1967; Ratcliffe 1980).

It is possible that communal roosting by Peregrines is not aberrant but would occur outside the breeding season elsewhere if population densities were high. On the Isle of Man, disturbance of breeding Peregrines is possibly lower than elsewhere in Britain and, in the absence of large-scale game-shooting, there is almost no persecution. As a result, the population density is high. Over the total area of habitat that could reasonably be occupied by Peregrines, the breeding density is perhaps of the order of one pair per 7 km². This is vastly higher than the average local density of one pair per 51 km² quoted for suitable areas over much of Britain (Ratcliffe 1962; Cramp & Simmons 1980), one pair per 160 km² in eastern France (Formon 1969), or one pair per 220 km² in the western Highlands (Cramp & Simmons 1980). Available evidence suggests that fledging success can be quite high on the Isle of Man, and, allowing for a small number of immatures and non-breeding adults, the resident population in late summer could even theoretically approach one Peregrine per 1 km² of suitable habitat. Hence, it is possible that communal roosting could be a consequence of high population density rather than any abnormal behaviour.

For the Peregrines concerned, the specific advantages of communal roosting are not immediately obvious (to us). Bird colonies are generally considered to convey advantages of predator detection (Lack 1968; Brown *et al.* 1990), and for the Hen Harrier, probably the most studied communal-roosting raptor in Britain, this has been suggested as the main reason for winter roosts (Picozzi & Cuthbert 1982). Communal roosts have also, however, been suggested to serve as a means for exchanging information on feeding areas (Ward & Zahavi 1973), and harrier roosts for pair-formation (Gurr 1968) or other social purposes (Watson 1977). For Manx Peregrines, predator avoidance does not provide a credible explanation for communal roosting behaviour, and our observations of extensive social interaction indicate that the latter may be the main advantage. It is also possible that the habitat chosen could enable the Peregrines to avoid exposure to continuous mobbing by crows and gulls *Larus*, which would be able to find them in more open areas.

The presence of other raptor species at the roost is more difficult to explain, although, for them, roosting in the same group of trees as several Peregrines is probably not so hazardous as it may appear, since the density of the trees would probably prevent the Peregrines hunting within the roost itself. It may be that some mutual advantage causes the various species to roost together, or that the presence of the Peregrines may provide some protection for the other raptors, although against what it is not clear. The locally abundant Carrion Crows (of the 'hooded' race) apparently—and perhaps wisely—tend to avoid the roost area, and their absence may be advantageous to the smaller species. Alternatively, the various species may be independently attracted to the same group of trees, none being there as a result of the presence of any of the others. This is perhaps particularly likely in the case of the Common Ravens, which do not appear to need protection since they have no obvious local

predators and do not generally suffer from mobbing.

There is a clear need for more observations to aid understanding of the reasons underlying communal roosting by Peregrine Falcons. Since this article was largely completed, we have found another site where Peregrines appear to be roosting communally in trees, although in this case there are fewer Peregrines, possibly a single family group, and the only other raptors coming in to the roost are Eurasian Sparrowhawks. This demonstrates that the site described above is not unique and suggests that similar roosts may occur in other areas.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to Roger Clarke for helpful discussion, for reading and commenting on the manuscript, and for providing us with copies of his papers before they were published.

Summary

In 1989 and 1990, a communal roost of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in trees was studied on the Isle of Man. Up to nine individuals, perhaps involving two family parties, roosted together, mainly during late August to early December, and these were accompanied by lesser numbers of three smaller raptor species and up to 17 Common Ravens *Corvus corax*. Communal roosting is apparently previously unknown for Peregrines. It is suggested that the Isle of Man roost may be a consequence of the high local population density (one pair per 7 km²), that social interaction may be the main advantage of it, that the tree habitat may possibly enable the birds to avoid mobbing, and that similar communal roosts may exist elsewhere.

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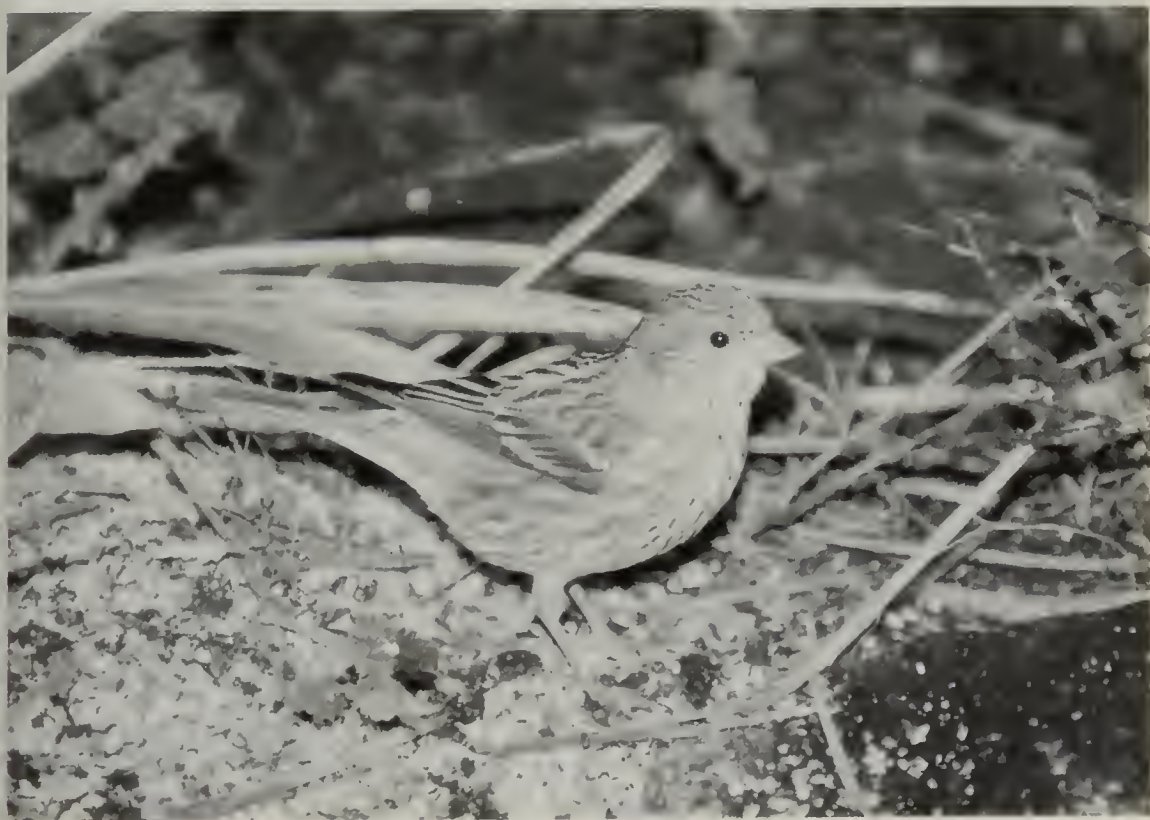
G. M. Kelly and Dr J. P. Thorpe, Department of Environmental and Evolutionary Biology, University of Liverpool, Port Erin Marine Laboratory, Port Erin, Isle of Man



Mystery photographs

185 By comparison with the surrounding vegetation, we can tell that last month's mystery bird (plate 10, repeated here in black-and-white) is a small to medium-sized passerine, and it has an obvious seed-eating bill. In the Western Palearctic, this broad group includes the Old World sparrows (Passeridae), the buntings and New World sparrows (Emberizidae), the finches (Fringillidae) and some larks (Alaudidae). Can we narrow the field somewhat? The bird is generally drab, heavily streaked above and below, has a relatively unmarked, rounded head, a forked tail with no apparent white outer feathers, and a rump that appears to be pinkish-red and different in colour from the rest of the upperparts.

The combination of heavy streaking, pink rump, lack of white outer tail feathers and bland facial markings immediately rules out all of the buntings and larks. The degree of streaking also excludes the Old World sparrows, which look heavier-headed than this bird, anyway. What of the New World sparrows? Not many have occurred in the Western Palearctic, and most can be excluded by the mystery bird's lack of any discernible head pattern. Both Fox Sparrow *Zonotrichia iliaca* and Song Sparrow *Z. melodia*, however, can sometimes have fairly subdued supercilia, although Song Sparrow always shows a strong malar stripe, lacking on this bird, and the underparts streaking



tends to be heavier and more in the form of spots; Fox Sparrow has a similar underparts pattern to Song Sparrow, but the spots are a rust colour and produce a much less streaky appearance than on the mystery bird.

We seem finally to have arrived at the finches, but not many of them fit our bird. The rounded head and fairly obvious neck are not what we associate with the small and more compact *Serinus* or *Carduelis* species, even though the streaking and wingbars are reminiscent of juvenile Siskin *C. spinus* and Common Redpoll *C. flammea*; in addition, the rump colour rules out both, and also the rather streaky European Serin *S. serinus*, as well as Linnet *C. cannabina*. Adult male Twite *C. flavirostris* shows a pink rump in summer, but also has an unstreaked buffy-orange throat and less streaked, plainer belly and flanks; juveniles are more heavily streaked below, but have a creamy-yellow bill and lack the pink rump.

The only species that really fit the look of this bird are the rosefinches *Carpodacus*, a large group of species many of which live at high altitudes in eastern Asia. Adult males are generally pinkish below and about the head, and most have a pink rump; females and immatures, however, are all streaked brown and present many identification problems. So far, only four are known to have occurred in the wild in the West Palearctic: Sinai Rosefinch *C. syriacus*, which has a restricted range in the Middle East; Great Rosefinch *C. rubicilla*, which in our area has a very restricted range in the Caucasus; Common Rosefinch *C. erythrinus*, a fairly common breeder in much of northern and eastern Europe and across Asia, and a scarce migrant (and recent colonist) in Britain; and Pallas's Rosefinch *C. roseus*, a rare vagrant from Siberia. We can immediately exclude Sinai Rosefinch, which is only very lightly streaked above and not at all below (*Brit. Birds* 82: 52-55). The other three are rather harder to separate, so we have to be more critical in our appraisal. The mystery bird does not look unusually big or long-tailed, it is as heavily streaked above as below, and the streaking covers most of the underparts apart from the undertail-coverts. It appears to have some reddish feathers in the forecrown, broad pale tertial edgings which are fairly uniform in both width and colour, and broad buffy tips to the greater and median coverts. The remiges and rectrices are black, edged brown, while the rump is a pinkish-red colour and paler than the rest of the bird. The legs are not noticeably dark or light, while the bill is longer than it is deep. From this, it should be possible to deduce the identification of the bird.

Very little of detail is written about Great Rosefinch. I saw several in Georgia a few years ago, in late May. They looked noticeably long-tailed, with a general appearance somewhat recalling a Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, though less stocky and slightly longer. They seemed to have a steep forehead, unlike the rounded head of our bird, and a very deep-based bill. The females appeared less heavily streaked above than below, and both sexes appeared to have black legs at that time of the year. Thus, it seems safe to exclude Great Rosefinch.

Common Rosefinch is much less heavily streaked than the mystery bird, especially around the head, where the black eye stands out like a bead in the plain face, giving the species a very distinctive look; in addition, the tertial markings are different, being both wider and paler at the tip than along the

edges, in contrast to the uniform width displayed by this bird. Common Rosefinch also tends, at least in worn plumage, to have narrower but much paler wingbars than this (fresh-plumaged) bird, and does not have the different-coloured rump.

So, the mystery bird would appear to be a Pallas's Rosefinch. But what about the New World *Carpodacus* species? Although none has yet been recorded as a genuine vagrant in the West Palearctic, House Finch *C. mexicanus* has turned up in the Netherlands as a probable escape (though possibly a ship-assisted vagrant?); females and immatures of this species are very similar to Pallas's Rosefinch, but they lack the pink rump and are less heavily streaked above, with a shorter primary projection (only half the length of the exposed tertials). Purple Finch *C. purpureus* could conceivably reach Britain: again, females and immatures are confusable with those of West Palearctic rosefinches, but they have a bolder head pattern than the mystery bird, with noticeable pale supercilium, a contrastingly darker ear-coverts patch and more marked submoustachial and malar stripes.

We can thus confidently identify the bird as a female or young male Pallas's Rosefinch. Some females which I have seen in captivity, however, have shown no visible red anywhere except on the rump, and this can persist until they are at least two years old; there is no reason to suppose that this is not the

13. Mystery photograph 186. Identify the species. Answer next month



case in the wild. Pallas's Rosefinches have been imported into western Europe in small numbers for the last four or five years and have recently been successfully reared in captivity in both Britain and Ireland. The two records of this species, an adult male in Denmark in October 1987 and a female or immature male on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, in June 1988 (and still under consideration by the BOU Records Committee), must therefore be questionable.

I photographed this captive adult female Pallas's Rosefinch in Britain in November 1991.

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Twenty-five years ago...

'A pair of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* reared three young on the Mainland of Orkney in the summer of 1967, the first record of this species nesting in the British Isles.' (*Brit. Birds* 61: 81, February 1968)

'We have received details of the successful nesting of a pair of Serins *Serinus serinus* in southern England in May 1967. Full descriptions and sketches have been considered and accepted by the Rarities Committee. The colonisation of Britain by this species has been expected for some years and a summary of the observations is published below to draw attention to the fact that it has now nested, so that other people may be encouraged to keep a watch for further breeding elsewhere. In case these particular birds return in 1968, however, we are suppressing the locality, the county and the names of the observers (at their own request).' (*Brit. Birds* 61: 87, February 1968)

Also in February 1968, a male Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* was found in the Forest of Ae, Dumfries-shire on 17th, and seen again on 19th and 23rd with a female.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: new to the Western Palearctic

Michael Peacock



At about 13.30 GMT on 20th September 1985, having seen a Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* at the end of the Burn of Feal on Fetlar, Shetland, I decided to walk up the burn, a walk I often did to look for migrants. The burn runs at the bottom of a valley which is distinctly steep-sided, giving a lot of shelter from the wind and, at the Wiek of Houbie end, a fair amount of cover: docks *Rumex*, thistles *Cirsium*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, and so on. The valley there is marshy and approximately 40 m wide, the sides being some 2 m high. About 200 m further up the burn, it narrows to about 20 m across, with 6-m sides. At this point there is a fence across the valley which in effect marks a change in vegetation, to short, well-grazed pasture.

I found the Pied Flycatcher again at the end of the burn and then walked into a patch of irises and flushed a Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, which flew farther up the burn to a large patch of thistles. As I approached the point where I had last seen the Garden Warbler, I saw another warbler moving through the thistles. It then flew from the thistles to the fence. It was unlike any warbler I had ever seen, having double yellow-white wing-bars, a bright green-yellow head, back and rump, and white-grey underparts. It perched on the fence with its tail erect and wings slightly drooped.

When the bird had worked its way to the end of the thistles where the fence crosses the burn, it flew back to the iris patch some 200 m away. Throughout the period of watching, the warbler would work its way up the burn to the point where the vegetation changed and then fly back to the Houbie end, sometimes in one continuous flight, or in stages. When the bird flew the longer distances, it had a slightly undulating flight, the wing-bars were very distinct and some white was visible on the outer tail feathers.

The warbler seemed to prefer to perch on vantage points, such as the fence, tops of docks, and thistles. It would then fly down into the vegetation to find insects before returning to a vantage point. When on the fence, the warbler would hop short distances with its tail erect and wings drooping slightly, flicking its wings intermittently. When its tail was held in this position, white on the undertail-coverts was very distinct. The warbler would also fly up into the air, flycatching, and then return to near the original take-off point, very like a flycatcher.

After viewing the bird for about 30 minutes, I returned to the house a few hundred metres away to get my telescope, with which I was able to observe a lot more detail, including a very distinct white eye-ring and the fact that the grey-white of the 'cheek' extended slightly above the eye.

After further observations, I returned again to the house, at about 15.00 hours, to ask my wife, Val, to come and look at the bird, as she was the only other birdwatcher on the island at the time. We both got excellent views of the bird in good sunlight.

At 16.30 hours, we returned to the house and I telephoned, among others, Mike Walker, the RSPB warden for Fetlar, who was on holiday—on Fair Isle! He managed to get off and return to Fetlar that evening, but arrived after dark. We went out at first light (05.30 hours) on 21st, to be joined later by other birders from the Shetland Mainland, but, despite thorough searching, the bird was not seen again. My last sighting had been at about 17.30 hours the previous evening.

The weather during the period of observation had been bright and sunny, with approximately 2 oktas cloud cover, with a force 4 northwesterly wind.

Although I was reasonably certain that the bird was an American warbler of some kind, I lacked a North American field guide, and it was not until my telephone conversation with Fair Isle that the species, Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*, was determined, the first to be recorded in Britain and the Western Palearctic.

Description

The following description is based on my field notes taken at the time, supplemented by my wife's notes.

SIZE Slightly smaller than Pied Flycatcher that it perched next to.

HEAD AND NECK Forehead, crown and upper part of nape bright green-yellow (moss-green). Ear-coverts and 'cheek' grey-white, extending to just above eye and also to side of neck and onto lower nape. Fairly distinct white eye-ring, no eye-stripe.

UPPERPARTS Mantle, back and rump all bright green/yellow, slightly duller than head and nape, and unstreaked.

WINGS Primaries and primary coverts dark grey with possible greenish tinge. Secondaries grey-green, edged dull yellow. Tertiaries greener than secondaries and with more yellow edging. Lesser coverts green, greater and median coverts green with two yellow-white wing-bars, the lower bar being slightly larger than the upper (both very distinct on open and closed wing).

The plumage was very fresh-looking, with little wear. After consulting North American bird guides, the age was confirmed as first-year. Apart from the conspicuous chestnut flanks which give the bird its name, both adult male and female also have a boldly streaked mantle.

TAIL Dark grey, possibly with some green. Some white on outer tail feathers, thought at the time to be probably on outer webs, but actually occurs only on inner webs (Dr A. G. Knox *in litt.*).

UNDERPARTS Chin white, throat and upper breast grey/white, becoming white on lower breast and belly, but greyer towards flanks. Undertail-coverts white and very conspicuous when tail held erect.

BARE PARTS Legs grey. Bill brown and typical warbler shape, upper mandible appeared lighter than lower, but this probably effect of light. Eye large-looking and dark.

BEHAVIOUR Perched frequently on fence or other vantage point, flying down into surrounding vegetation to catch insects, also up in air like flycatcher. Often hopped short distances with tail erect and wings drooped, sometimes flicking wings. Appearance recalling Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* when tail held erect.



114-17. Chestnut-sided Warblers
Dendroica pensylvanica, Canada.
Above, male, May 1986 (Martin S.
Garner); right and below, juveniles,
August 1991 and August 1988
(Colin Bradshaw); bottom, September
1974 (A. D. Brewer)



Distribution

The Chestnut-sided Warbler breeds from central-eastern Alberta east to Nova Scotia and south to eastern Nebraska, southern Wisconsin, northern Ohio, central New Jersey and in the Appalachians south to northern Georgia and northwestern South Carolina. It winters from southern Nicaragua to Panama.

Weather and other transatlantic vagrants

The weather pattern during the preceding weeks had seen an increase in pressure to the south, moving the track of the Atlantic depressions farther north after 7th September. After 18th, the centre of pressure moved to the east over Europe and southerly or southeasterly winds became more frequent towards the end of the month.

No other North American vagrants had appeared in Britain in autumn 1985 before the sighting of the Chestnut-sided Warbler, but both Northern Parula *Parula americana* and Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* were found on 30th September, to be followed by an October that was confidently described as: 'the best-ever single month for American landbirds in Britain and Ireland, both in quantity and quality' (Dawson & Allsopp 1986). For two observers on Fetlar, the action started ten days earlier.

Acknowledgment

I am most grateful to Dr M. A. Ogilvie for assistance in preparing this paper for publication.

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Peter Lansdown (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) and Dr Alan Knox (Chairman, British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee) have commented as follows: 'A single circulation of the record to each committee was sufficient for the identification of this distinctive species to be accepted unanimously.

'Within the eastern deciduous forests of North America, this is an abundant species, the third most abundant of 29 warbler species in the breeding bird survey in the eastern United States (Robbins *et al.* 1986), comprising about 25% of all *Dendroica* species. It was the fourth most abundant of 37 warbler species in TV tower kills in the 1960s (Nisbet 1970), comprising about 8% of all warblers. Despite this abundance, however, it has a somewhat western migration, and is quite scarce as a coastal migrant on the eastern seaboard. For example, at Manomet Bird Observatory, it was only 23rd of 39 warbler species netted in 1966-85, comprising only 0.4% of all catches (*MBO Newsletter*, May 1986). On Sable Island, it was recorded in only five of 13 autumns, with a total of eight birds (McLaren 1981). In Bermuda, it is 'regular but uncommon' in late September, but is outnumbered by at least 19 other warbler species (Wingate 1973). For these reasons, it was not considered a very likely candidate for reaching Europe by Robbins (1980), who calculated a

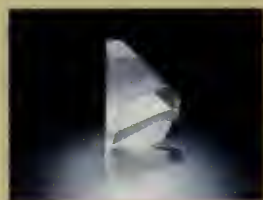


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predicted likelihood for transatlantic vagrancy for 104 species. It was placed in the bottom group of 35 species with low predicted values. Others from this group, however, including Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*, Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca*, Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* and, most recently, Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*, have since reached Europe. Chestnut-sided Warbler has been recorded in Greenland (AOU 1983).

'The Feltar Chestnut-sided Warbler fitted the familiar pattern of dates and localities for Nearctic landbirds in Britain and Ireland. This made the BOURC's task of assessing the Feltar individual's likely origin a straightforward one. The Committee voted unanimously for natural occurrence (*Brit. Birds* 81: 590; *Ibis* 133: 220), which resulted in Chestnut-sided Warbler being placed in Category A of the British and Irish list.' EDS



ICBP news

Transmitter plans revived The government of Israel has revived plans to build a huge Voice of America radio transmitter in the Arava Valley, Israel, even though the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) ordered by the Israeli court in 1990 is incomplete.

The EIA was ordered after environmentalists voiced considerable opposition. The transmitter, which would be one of the largest and most powerful in the world, would cover an 8-km² site in the central Arava Valley. The site is on the main migration route of millions of birds, and large numbers would be likely to collide with the structures. There are also concerns about the disorienting effect of the radiation from such a huge transmitter.

ICBP has once again written to the Prime Minister of Israel urging him seriously to consider the environmental consequences of the scheme.

GEORGINA GREEN

International Council for Bird Preservation, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0TJ



IWC news

Chough census The Irish breeding population of Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* was estimated at 220-906 pairs in 1992. The wide range is due to the high proportion (52.6%) of pairs that were recorded as 'possibly breeding'. The total number of breeding pairs has probably been overestimated, since non-breeding pairs in suitable nesting habitat and pairs prospecting future nesting sites will have been recorded as, respectively, 'possibly breeding' and 'probably breeding'. The number of flock birds is thought to be a minimum, as flocks away from the coast are likely often to have been unrecorded.

Compared with the 1982 survey (*Irish Birds* 2: 257-271), the number of pairs has increased by 34% and the number of flock birds by 32%. There were increases in counties Leitrim, Sligo, Kerry, Cork, Waterford and Wexford; decreases in Clare and Antrim; and little change in Donegal, Mayo and Galway. Analysis of sub-county regions showed increases in northwestern areas south to north Mayo. Western regions between south Mayo and west Clare (inclusive) mostly showed decreases. All the southern regions, with the exception of southwest Cork, showed increases. There was a severe decrease in north Antrim. At inland sites, choughs have increased in counties Sligo and Leitrim, but decreased in Kerry and Galway. On islands, chough populations are mostly stable, but have decreased on a few, especially Rathlin, where they have disappeared, and increased on one.

ORAN O'SULLIVAN

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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1990

Robert Spencer and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the eighteenth annual Report published by the Panel, setting out the annual stock-taking of most of our rarer breeding species. The seventeenth report was published in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 349-392).

The history of the Panel, its purposes and methods of operation were recently described in detail (*Brit. Birds* 85: 117-122). As part of a general review of its work, the Panel has reassessed the purposes and usefulness of this annual published report. Several changes have been introduced now and there will be others in the future, aimed mainly at increasing background information and comments on and interpretation of the data. Automatic repetition of the annual totals each year is being discontinued, and tables will be included only when especially relevant. For the commonest species, the detailed county-by-county breakdown of regional totals which has recently appeared as an appendix will, in future, be compiled in the same way as hitherto, but distributed individually to each county or regional bird recorder for checking purposes, rather than published in the Panel's annual report.

Forty years ago there was a very modest programme of counting birds in Britain: a monthly wildfowl count, an annual count of nests of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and, inspired by the late James Fisher, an occasional count of Northern Gannets *Morus bassamus*. Today, counting and recording is more widespread. Article 2 of the European Community Directive on the conservation of wild birds requires Member States 'to take requisite measures to maintain the population of the species referred to in Article 1 at a level which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements, or to adapt the population of these species to that level.' Counting birds, it seems, has developed from being an enjoyable outlet for scientific curiosity to a manage-

ment tool for use in European Community countries. The large number of voluntary observers, submitting records via the county recording network to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, play a vital part in the census programme.

The Panel confines its attention to about 90 species, the breeding populations of which are normally fewer than 300 pairs. With such small numbers, it might be thought a relatively easy task to count the entire populations with some accuracy. Alas, that is not the case, and it is worthwhile to examine why some rare breeding species pose problems.

There are about 150 territory-holding pairs of Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* in Britain. In any one year, only a small proportion of them is found by casual birdwatching. Furthermore, non-breeding pairs and individuals often move from water to water. Thus, the Panel's data-collecting methods, based on reports from casual observers, received via county recorders, and on Schedule 1 licence returns, are simply not geared to obtaining reliable population estimates: this species needs to be censused by special, co-ordinated surveys of potentially suitable waters, and so is not included on the Panel's list.

Some of the species for which the Panel does attempt to monitor total breeding populations also present difficulties. For example, local and holidaying birdwatchers are likely to find most of the Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* at well-known, readily accessible sites, and this, combined with systematic checking of other suitable, but often remote, lochs produces a reliable national total. The quest for accurate totals of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra*, however, calls for co-ordinated searching.

There are often problems in determining whether or not breeding took place. For example, most Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* are located by sound. According to *BWP*, however, successful pairs of Spotted Crakes are almost silent when nesting; it is the lone males which may seek to attract a female in June and July. How many pairs remain undetected? Corn Crakes *Crex crex* are almost silent for about two weeks after arrival, very vociferous for two to four weeks, and then sing only irregularly in July and August. Of Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, *BWP* notes that the male calls only occasionally once mated. Yet many observers interpret a Quail calling over two or three months as an indication of probable breeding. Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* are at least seen during the breeding season, but males may boom at some distance from their regular spot, so that counting booming males may lead to an overestimate.

Most bird populations are conventionally counted in pairs, and this is appropriate for the majority of Panel species, but not all. Marsh Harrier males *Circus aeruginosus* are often bigamous or even polygamous, so that the most meaningful figure—if it can be obtained—is the number of breeding females. Male Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* can also be polygamous, but locating the retiring females is so much a matter of chance that the only practicable course is to count the singing males.

The numbers of pairs of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* and Leach's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* are so difficult to count that the size of colonies usually has to be expressed within wide limits. On a smaller scale, observers supplying data to the Panel may sometimes be faced with similar problems, such as determining the numbers of Cetti's Warblers in an exten-

sive reedbed or Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* within large areas of heathland. Many Panel species are protected by the confidentiality which observers themselves attach to their records. An exchange of information between observers would often clarify apparently confusing situations, such as those presented by Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*.

In some localities, both splitting and lumping of sites occur. Thus a linear distribution of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* nesting in twos and threes is by one observer lumped as a single colony, whilst another may judge it to consist of separate, small colonies. Many such problems are avoided by the provision of map references, which fortunately is an increasingly common practice. Yet it may not always be practicable. For example, the New Forest is a great reservoir of wildlife, including the Dartford Warbler. Which is more useful, a list of those pairs which were located, with map references, or an estimate of the total population, made by an experienced observer scaling up the figures from that part of the area which was covered thoroughly? Using this sampling technique, the Dartford Warbler total in 1990 was 911 pairs, compared with 522 pairs in 1989 and only 116 pairs in 1979. But, given the above choice, the Panel would greatly prefer the detailed, precisely located count information (since this is factual rather than conjectural).

If recording were left to chance, the totals of secretive, inconspicuous species, such as Northern Goshawk and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, would be grossly underestimated. Fortunately, informal study groups devote many long hours each spring and summer tracking down and counting their target species and ensuring, so far as possible, their well-being. Thus, our knowledge of each targeted species is often relatively good. More such specialist groups would be welcomed.

One great asset of the Panel is the vast network of co-operating observers, who pick up the local and the occasional records such as nest-building by a Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, and the successful breeding in Scotland of Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (a species whose demise as a breeder was mourned in the report for 1989) and breeding by the elusive and secretive Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*. At a less exotic level, one cannot devise a survey to discover, for example, all breeding Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*. Only a large, voluntary network can gather in data when the species' habitat is extensive and breeding could occur 'almost anywhere'.

The problems of providing an accurate summary of the UK's rare breeding birds, discussed above, may be summarised as:

- (1) under-reporting, either because of a dearth of observers within the species' range (e.g. Red-wing *Turdus iliacus*) or because information is deliberately withheld (e.g. some raptors in some areas)
- (2) reconciling differing reports to determine the degree of overlap, or to detect gaps, if map references are not included (e.g. Stone-curlew *Buho oedipus*, Avocet)
- (3) censusing difficulties, often caused by habitats that are extensive or difficult of access (e.g. Common Scoter, Dartford Warbler, Great Bittern)
- (4) biological, such as cessation of singing by breeders but not by non-breeders (e.g. Spotted Crake, Common Quail, Wrenneck *Jynx torquilla*), wandering by singing males even if they are breeding (e.g. Great Bittern) and polygamy (e.g. Marsh Harrier, Cetti's Warbler).

Thus, establishing the numbers of rare breeding birds is, at present, often an imprecise science. The totals of each may be fewer than 300 pairs, but for

most species the challenge to provide reliable figures is probably greater than when counting thousands of commoner ones.

In general, 1990 was a year in which successes outnumbered failures. Wild Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* bred, and increased numbers summered. The total of Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* (a species notoriously under-reported) was the highest for 15 years, but is still known to be too low. The Hobby's *Falco subbuteo* remarkable increase in numbers and range expansion continued undiminished. Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, for decades confined to East Anglia, continued their move to wetlands elsewhere. The Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* appeared to be more securely established than ever before. It was possible to believe that Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* were starting to make a come-back.

On the negative side, the Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, although coming so near, once again failed to fledge any young. Common Scoters and Great Bitterns were both reduced to dangerously small populations. Numbers of Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* dropped back after several encouraging years, but a pair did nest in a new county. Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros*, despite their presence over many decades, still show no signs of widespread major colonisation. The population of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* remained as volatile as ever, and it may be that the numbers present in any one spring are determined largely by the weather they experience on their northbound passage.

The Panel

The members of the Panel are Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, Robert Spencer (Secretary), D. A. Stroud and Dr R. W. Summers. Although they reflect the interests and needs of the Panel's sponsoring bodies—the JNCC, the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*—the individual members each serve on the Panel in a personal capacity.

The Panel's work was commissioned by the NCC (now the JNCC) as part of its programme for nature conservation, but the Panel's other sponsoring bodies—the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*—have also supported the work financially.

The Panel collects records for the whole of the United Kingdom (both Great Britain and Northern Ireland), but not for the Republic of Ireland.

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SPECIALIST CONTRIBUTORS Jake Allsop, Colin Crooke, Peter E. Davis, Dr Andy Evans, Dr Rhys Green, R. A. Image, John Mitchell, S. J. Petty and Glen Tyler.

We apologise if any names have by mischance been omitted: the spirit was willing.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

Northern Ireland Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire (West Midlands, in the new county structure), Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales All present-day counties (i.e. includes the former Monmouth)

Scotland, S The former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire

Scotland, Mid Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Moray, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire

Scotland, N & W Argyllshire, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Orkney, Ross & Cromarty, Shetland, Sutherland, Western Isles (Outer Hebrides)

Systematic list

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Five localities in six counties: two pairs built nests.

England, E One locality: male from 29th March to 21st August, joined by female on 10th May; they nested, but she died on 28th May.

England, Central One locality: one in breeding plumage on 1st April.

Wales One locality: one on 20th July.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1) pair made three nesting attempts, but failed; (2) adult on 11th April.

Over the last 15 years, this beautiful grebe has increasingly summered in Western Europe and has bred in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Its attempts to nest in Britain have so far failed to result in any fledged young, and seem to have levelled off. For a full account of this species attempting to breed in England, see Parslow-Otsu & Elliott (1991, *Brit. Birds* 84: 188-191). LAB

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

36 localities: 74-86 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) adult in May and September; (2) adult from 4th May to 11th June; (3) adult in April and May.

Scotland, N & W 33 localities: (1)-(33) 77 pairs and six singles summered; 74 pairs bred, rearing 46 young.

The RSPB Highland Office co-ordinated the fieldwork on which these results are based. The population has been increasing very slowly from initial colonisation in 1908 to 43 pairs in 1971, when the first full count was carried out, and now to 74 pairs confirmed breeding in 1990. Productivity, however, continues to be low.

RS & RWS

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

19 localities in 11 counties: 21-37 pairs breeding.

- England, E** One locality: two from April to July, but no evidence of breeding.
- England, SW** Two localities: (1) pair in March; (2) pair fledged three young.
- England, Central** Nine localities: (1) five adults reared at least three young; (2) four adults; (3)-(9) one or two present in summer, but no evidence of breeding.
- England, N** Three localities: (1) 12 pairs reared 11 young; (2) pair in May; (3) one on 29th April.
- Scotland** Four localities: (1) four pairs reared four young; (2) two pairs bred, raising two young; (3) two pairs present from April, but no young seen; (4) one in May and three in June.

The long-term trend for this grebe is encouraging, but more-detailed monitoring is required to determine productivity.

RWS

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Twelve localities: 20 booming males.

- England, E** 11 localities: (1)-(6) single booming males; (7) two booming males, and young being fed at one nest; (8) booming male, and nest with young; (9)(10) two booming males at each; (11) three booming males.
- England, N** One site: four booming males, one nest located.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	19	16	15	18	18	15	12	17	14	14	8
Confirmed (pairs)	4	1	1	0	5	0	0	1	2	3	3
Booming males	48	47	35	44	36	28	23	22	30	30	20

The Panel is indebted to Glen Tyler of the RSPB for supplying some of the data used in this report. The Great Bittern is a difficult species to count, but the long run of data from 1977, when the RBBP first covered the species, indicates a marked decline in the number of both individuals and occupied sites. The 1990 total of 20 booming males was the lowest ever recorded by the Panel. Although some of this decline can be explained by a re-appraisal of counting techniques, the plight of the Great Bittern is causing considerable concern. Research by the RSPB suggests that habitat degradation may be one of the most important causes of the decline, so there is hope that the situation can be improved by appropriate management of the key sites.

KWS

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

15 localities: 5-32 pairs breeding, at least three of them feral.

- England, SE** One locality: four adults on 27th May, pair with one cygnet on 31st May.
- Scotland, S** One locality: one, described by observer as 'tame'.
- Scotland, Mid** Two localities: (1) two feral pairs, each hatching three young; (2) pair with four large cygnets.
- Scotland, N & W** 11 localities: (1) four adults and a first-year, no date given; (2) single; (3) single, injured; (4) four all summer; (5) one on nest, later deserted; (6) pair, one injured; (7)(8) single adults summered; (9) two adults summered; (10) pair present until at least 12th May; (11) two pairs, one laid five eggs, none of which hatched, 13 other singles all summered.

1989 Scotland, N & W CORRECTION: the entry under the heading SHETLAND in the report for 1989 should have been headed ORKNEY.

A remarkable year for the number summering and for breeding by pairs which appeared to be genuinely wild, in contrast to many records of recent years that have clearly related to 'pricked' birds unable to migrate back to their Icelandic breeding grounds. It will be intriguing to record the fortunes of cygnets in areas where breeding has been successful. Elsewhere, extra-territorial populations of Arctic-breeding species such as Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* have developed in temperate regions from just a few successful pairs. Perhaps Whooper Swan could yet become a more regular breeder here. *DAS*

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

May have bred.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1)(2) at least one individual summered, being seen on 16th June and 14th and 27th July. A party of six was seen on 7th August—five weeks earlier than the earliest migrant arrivals from Iceland—but the individuals were not aged.

Since Greylag Goose *Anser anser* is an increasingly common reintroduced species, few observers bother to examine them closely. Perhaps we should do so since Pinkfeet could perhaps be overlooked amongst them. *RS*

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

20 localities: 9-36 pairs breeding.

England, SE Four localities: (1) pair on 26th-27th May, but no evidence of breeding; (2) two throughout June; (3) two males in May, one in June; (4) two males and a female on 8th June, pair on 23rd June, male in July.

England, E Six localities: (1) two pairs most of April, but no evidence of breeding; (2) three pairs in late spring, but only one injured male in summer; (3) pair seen nest-prospecting, but did not stay; (4) pair on 29th April, one on 26th May; (5) female on 3rd May; (6) female throughout May.

England, N Three localities: (1) four pairs from early April to early May, one pair remained through summer, but no proof of breeding; (2) three pairs on 17th April, one pair during 21st-24th April, male on 16th and 24th June, female on 22nd July; (3) prospecting pair stayed from April into the summer.

Wales One locality: two females, one with nine eggs, but no young reared.

Scotland Two localities: (1) pair from 19th March to 20th April; (2) male from 8th May to 27th June.

Scotland, N & W Four localities: (1) three pairs on 7th April, one pair on 17th May; (2) probably seven pairs bred, two broods of four; (3) pair on several dates during April to June; (4) at least six pairs bred.

The population is relatively stable, but with a bias in numbers towards the north. As with other rare breeding ducks, this species is probably under-recorded, with a high proportion of records coming from nature reserves and other areas with resident wardens or staff. *DAS*

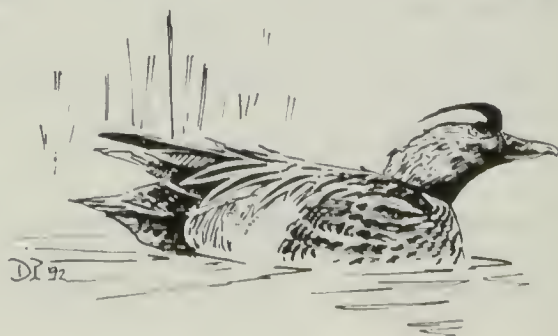
Garganey *Anas querquedula*

87 localities: 14-111 pairs breeding.

England, SW Eight localities in four counties: 2-10 pairs breeding.

England, SE 20 localities in eight counties: 1-28 pairs breeding.

England, E 29 localities in three counties: 7-39 pairs breeding.



England, Central Seven localities in four counties: 1-7 pairs breeding.

England, N 14 localities in seven counties: 2-18 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid, N & W Five localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	34	48	66	59	46	32	42	36	37	81	87
Confirmed (pairs)	4	8	10	15	4	4	8	8	11	18	14
Possible (pairs)	50	50	84	55	53	36	47	37	40	80	97
Max. total (pairs)	54	58	94	70	57	40	55	45	51	98	111

A second good year for this species, with the highest number of sites for over ten years, although only 14 pairs were confirmed to have bred. Since 1980, numbers have been very variable, with a peak in 1982-83, followed by low numbers until the last two years. The Garganey is well known as a sporadic breeder: numbers in the UK are said to be related to spring weather and flooding conditions, although the exact factors have never been demonstrated. A detailed study of the RBBP records may help us to understand this variability.

KWS

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

133 localities: 207-293 pairs breeding.

England, SW Eight localities: 14-18 pairs breeding.

England, SE 46 localities: 78-127 pairs breeding.

England, E 31 localities: 46-54 pairs breeding.

England, Central Eight localities: 9-12 pairs breeding.

England, N 28 localities: 58-68 pairs breeding.

Wales Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Four localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid One locality: one pair breeding.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

The numbers reported to the Panel almost certainly underestimate the true size of the population, and it is likely that numbers changed little in the three years 1988-1990, though those reported varied from 184-336 pairs breeding in 1988 to the 207-293 in 1990. A full account of the history of the Common Pochard breeding in Britain, by Dr A. D. Fox, was published in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 83-98).

RS & JTRS

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

Scotland, N One locality: pair on 4th June.

This is the poorest showing for several years, serving to emphasise how atypical were the records in Anglesey in 1988 and Lincolnshire in 1989. CJB

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, Mid One locality: female summered, not departing until 19th November.

This is presumed to be the same individual that summered at the same locality in 1989, which was the first to be reported to the Panel. Whilst breeding occurred in Orkney in 1911, and perhaps on five other occasions there and in Shetland in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, there have been no reports since 1926 apart from in 1969, when breeding was suspected in the Western Isles.

LAB

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Nine localities: 6-29 pairs breeding.

Northern Ireland One locality.

FERMANAGH One locality: at least six pairs present but no young seen.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) two males and one female on 10th May; (2) two pairs on 10th May, two females and three juveniles on 3rd July, a female and one juvenile on 18th July.

Scotland, N & W Six localities.

ARGYLL One locality: three nests, clutches of 6, 6 and 12, but no young fledged, seven other possible pairs.

CATHNESS One locality: three or four pairs on 12th May.

SHETLAND One locality: two pairs, one of which reared a duckling.

SUTHERLAND Three localities: (1) male on 29th May; (2) female on 11th May; (3) at least one pair, and breeding thought probable.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	10	6	17	6	9	25	35	15	36	7	9
Confirmed (pairs)	7	5	14	10	17	2	8	29	14	8	6
Possible (pairs)	106	77	98	75	52	72	92	33	76	32	23
Max. total (pairs)	113	82	112	85	69	74	100	62	90	40	29

A new low point for a species known to be declining in numbers. The Northern Ireland population, on Lower Lough Erne, has declined from around 150 pairs in the late 1960s to a remnant of six pairs now. Elsewhere, the losses may not be so severe as the table suggests, for only a systematic survey of remote hill lochans is likely to produce reasonably complete figures.

RS & ATWS

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding mainly confined to one extensive nestbox scheme.

England, SE Three localities.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: female summered.

ESSEX One locality: male summered.

KENT One locality: female from May to July.

England, Central Three localities.

LEICESTERSHIRE Three localities: (1) male on 7th May; (2) male to 12th May, two females on 23rd July, female from 1st August; (3) five in mid May, male, female and juvenile in June, female and five in eclipse in July.

England, N Four localities.

CHESHIRE One locality: two birds of the year from early August.

LANCASHIRE One locality: two feral broods, totalling 15 young, on 25th May.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female and seven flying juveniles on 28th July.

YORKSHIRE One locality: male from 29th May to 10th September.

Scotland, S Three localities.

BORDERS Two localities: (1) male on 9th June; (2) male on 27th June.

LOTHIANS, M & W One locality: male from 22nd April to 13th May, two males on 18th May, three males and a female on 27th June.

Scotland, Mid Three localities.

MORAYSHIRE One locality: pair plus one male on 23rd April, female with duckling from 2nd to 9th June.

COUNTY CONFIDENTIAL Two localities: (1) pair from 28th May to 28th July; (2) first-year on 2nd June.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

CATHNESS One locality: 13 on 9th June, four males and seven females on 21st June.

SHETLAND Two localities: (1) female on 8th July, possibly summering; (2) female summered.

HIGHLAND Nestbox area: 92 boxes and 8 natural sites occupied, 53 clutches laid, at least 529 young produced.



	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Confirmed (pairs)	26	29	27	47	53	67	77	80	90	88	100
Young hatched (min.)	165	286	220	209	311	336	390	332	427	455	529

It is pleasing to note the continuing increase in both the confirmed number of pairs and the number of young reared from the nestbox population. This began in 1970, when a female produced four young in the Spey Valley; by 1978 there were 12 nests. In recent years, some pairs have started to nest in natural holes, so there may now be additional pairs nesting in unknown, natural sites.

There has been a growing tendency for individuals to summer well to the south. In 1990, there was successful breeding in two localities in addition to the known feral population in Lancashire. These are the first documented successful breeding attempts in England since the report of nesting in Cheshire in 1931-32.

LAB

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

19 localities, in 13 counties: 3-19 pairs breeding.

Great Britain 19 localities: (1) pair laid two eggs, but young died when about three weeks old, apparently owing to drought; (2) pair believed to have attempted breeding; (3)-(5) a minimum of seven individuals during 26th May to September; (6) single on 20th May, two on 25th August, pair displaying in August; (7) pair on several occasions; (8) first-summer on 6th June; (9) singly on 9th August and 2nd September; (10) male from 31st May, pair on July 3rd, at least one young fledged; (11) displaying male on 26th May; (12) one or two on several dates; (13) one in June; (14) pair, and family party of two adults and two juveniles in September; (15) 'reported to have bred'; (16) one, on one occasion; (17)(18) singles, thought to be on passage; (19) one displaying.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	3
Max. total (pairs)	5	9	3	5	2	4	6	7	10	20	19

A secretive species which probably often goes unrecorded. The records received by the Panel indicate that the species is increasing slightly in numbers, but this may in part be due to greater skills on the part of observers, and the realisation that Honey-buzzards are not, as was popularly supposed, confined to a restricted area of southern England.

ATWS

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

84 pairs, and at least 58 other individuals.

Wales 84 localities: breeding successful at 65 localities. Welsh kites had a remarkable season in 1990, the most successful by far since records began. A total of 65 pairs was proved to breed, 11 more than in 1989. No fewer than 47 of them reared young, and 73 young birds flew, 25 more than the previous highest number, in 1989. No doubt a second very mild winter, followed by another warm, dry spring, provided a good prey-base and good conditions for obtaining food. It was the first time since 1954 that the number of young reared exceeded the number of breeding pairs. It may be no coincidence that rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* reached plague proportions in much of central Wales in 1990, for the first time since they were greatly reduced by myxomatosis in the summer of 1954. The great affliction of 1990 turned out to be egg-collecting, and probably eight (possibly ten) clutches were stolen. (As in previous years, the Panel is much indebted to Peter Davis, the NCC contract worker on Red Kites, for much detailed information.)

The welcome increase of the Welsh population comes at a time of growing international measures to conserve Red Kites in Europe—listed as 'globally endangered'. Some progress has been made with the Government-initiated

programme to stamp out the scourge of illegal poisoning. Red Kites will always be vulnerable to the use of poison on baited carrion. In parallel with these initiatives is a joint JNCC/RSPB programme to reintroduce Red Kites to England and Scotland. This work is being undertaken with the close co-operation of Swedish and Spanish conservation authorities. All these steps suggest that the fortunes of Red Kites in Britain are unlikely to be as insecure as they have been in recent decades. DAS

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*
Reintroduction.

Scotland Nine pairs made breeding attempts and two young were raised, one each from two nests.

This is the largest number of breeding attempts so far. The seemingly low productivity may be because the breeding birds are still inexperienced. RHS

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
82-115 'pairs' breeding.

Great Britain Some of the information submitted is too sketchy to permit consistent, detailed analysis, but a best estimate is that there were 73 males, some of them bigamous, one polygamous, and as many as 110 females. A minimum number of 154 young is almost certainly an underestimate, since the bald statement 'bred' has been interpreted as one young. The totals above include four pairs in Scotland, two of them breeding successfully.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Breeding males	16	17	19	21	27	29	26	40	42	58	73
Breeding females	20	20	24	28	32	31	32	46	56	66	110
Young*	44	48	59	71	66	86	82	126	145	172	154

*It is not possible to report how many of these young fledged.

Given much careful protection by conservation bodies, and sympathetic consideration by farmers and landowners, the species is clearly thriving.

There are many marshy habitats in Britain to which Marsh Harriers might spread. If they do turn up in a new locality, it is essential to remember that they are intolerant of disturbance.

The Panel is very grateful to R. A. Image for much detailed information about the breeding performance of this and the next species. RS



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Nine localities: 5-9 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) clutch of five eggs laid, but young taken by fox *Vulpes vulpes*; (2) nest, from which two young fledged during 28th-30th June.

England, SE Two localities: (1) two young hatched from clutch of two and fledged on 31st July; (2) male during 15th-16th June.

England, E Five localities: (1) four young hatched and ringed, and at least three fledged; (2) first-summer male from 4th June to 23rd August; (3) pair present during late April and early May, the female being seen nearby in June, and a juvenile in August near to a site occupied in 1989; (4) brood of four, all ringed; (5) pair in mid June.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	8	8	7	8	2	9	10	10	14	15	9
Confirmed (pairs)	2	2	3	6	1	3	7	6	6	7	5
Possible (pairs)	6	7	5	4	1	6	3	4	8	8	4
Max. total (pairs)	8	9	8	10	2	9	10	10	14	15	9

A somewhat disappointing year, especially when compared with the continuing success of the Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*, but the table does suggest that there are occasional disaster years. It was encouraging that the localities in SE England were in a county which has not featured before in the Panel's files for Montagu's Harrier.

RS

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

155 localities: 93-172 pairs breeding.

England & Wales 101 localities involving 27 counties: (1)-(101) total of 56 pairs known to have attempted breeding, hatching at least 59 young, with a further 30 pairs probably attempting breeding and 32 pairs possibly doing so.

Scotland 54 localities in three regions: (1)-(54) total of 37 pairs bred, rearing 103 young, 14 more pairs may have bred, and three possibly did so.

A total of 30 counties (including Scottish regions) was involved, a number exceeded only by the 31 in 1986-88; numbers of pairs confirmed breeding were exceeded only in 1988 and 1989 (108 and 112 respectively); and calculated maximum number of pairs only in 1988 (when there were 176).

With most of the Goshawk pairs nesting in extensive, thick conifer forest, proving breeding calls for determination, experience and stamina on the part of observers, and the above record would be nothing like so full without the efforts of a number of Goshawk enthusiasts, particularly those inspired and guided by the efforts of S. J. Petty of the Forestry Commission Wildlife and Conservation Research Branch. Even so, many pairs of Goshawks must go undetected, or unreported, and informed opinion puts the probable population at 200-300 pairs. The trend, despite vicissitudes, is one of an increasing and expanding population.

Recent papers have described the breeding habitat and breeding biology of a population of Northern Goshawks in lowland Britain (*Brit. Birds* 82: 56-67; 83: 527-540).

RS & JTRS

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

62 pairs: 48 pairs fledged 88 young.

England, SE One locality: two adults from 10th to 12th May, one to 13th May, and one during 23rd-25th May.

England, E One locality: at least one, probably two, summered.



Scotland, S Three localities: (1) pair plus another adult in May and June, and a nest built; (2) one or two from 3rd May to 14th June, frequenting six or seven sites; (3) 'pair reported to have bred'.

Elsewhere in Scotland Total of 62 eyries known to be occupied, an increase of four on 1989; 56 pairs laid eggs; 48 clutches hatched, but there were only 44 successful broods, from which a total of 88 young fledged. Very cold weather after hatching is thought to have caused the deaths of some young, and six (possibly seven) nests were robbed.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Pairs	25	25	30	30	31	34	42	50	53	58	62
Successful pairs	19	20	21	20	21	22	24	30	38	38	44
Young reared	41	42	45	45	47	53	48	56	81	81	88

The formula 'Elsewhere in Scotland' permits the recording of the ever-growing population, without giving any indication of the spread of the species. Extension of range has been occurring all the time, and the entries under the heading 'Scotland, S' indicate that the spread is, or will shortly be, to areas beyond the bounds of Highland Scotland.

RS

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

390 localities: 154-434 pairs breeding.

England, SW 55-120 pairs breeding, 60 young reported.

England, SE 34-167 pairs breeding, 63 young reported.

England, E 36-88 pairs breeding, 50 young reported.

England, Central 23-38 pairs breeding, 57 young reported.

England, N 1-16 pairs breeding, two young reported.

Wales 5-10 pairs breeding, seven young reported.

Scotland 0-2 pairs breeding, no young reported.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Confirmed (pairs)	64	51	97	80	93	98	91	108	103	140	154
Possible (pairs)	91	10	105	182	116	148	202	164	226	250	287
Max. total (pairs)	155	160	202	262	209	246	293	272	329	390	441
Young reared (min.)	86	89	63	104	91	117	126	160	133	205	239

The increase in numbers and the expansion of range both continue, with the species pushing westwards into Wales, eastwards through East Anglia and northwards as far as Yorkshire. It is breeding successfully, and the figures given for the number of young reared really are minima, because the statement 'bred' — not uncommon in some reports — is arbitrarily counted as one.

In 1985, Fuller *et al.* (*Ibis* 127: 510-516) proposed an average of two pairs per occupied 10-km *Atlas* square, which, if correct, would have given a figure

of about 500 pairs in the early 1970s. I. J. Ferguson-Lees has used the same figure of two pairs per occupied 10-km square to project a possible present maximum of 850 pairs (*New Breeding Atlas*, in press). RS & LAB

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

255 localities: 13-377 pairs breeding.

England, SW 63 localities: 2-127 pairs breeding.

England, SE 23 localities: 0-45 pairs breeding.

England, E 21 localities: 1-39 pairs breeding.

England, Central 37 localities: 3-42 pairs breeding.

England, N 37 localities: 3-41 pairs breeding.

Wales 21 localities: 0-22 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S 13 localities: 1-19 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid 31 localities: 0-31 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W 9 localities: 3-11 pairs breeding.

The Panel has been collecting Quail data only since 1986, so it is difficult to put the 1989 invasion (27-1,655 pairs) into perspective using the Panel's data alone. An analysis of local bird report records during 1973-89 showed a range from 20 singing males in 1973 to 236 in 1983. The previous peak years were 1947 (over 100), 1953 (over 300) and 1964 (over 600) (*Brit. Birds* 49: 161-166; 57: 340; 60: 101-102), but there were far fewer observers then, so it is difficult to compare these totals with those in recent years. Nevertheless, the 1989 invasion was the largest for many years, and almost certainly the largest this century. The 1990 totals are also much higher than those reported during 1986-88, so it may be legitimate to assume that some of the 1989 birds returned in 1990. The previous year's invasion will, however, have alerted observers to the possible presence of Quails, so perhaps led to a wider-than-usual search of likely localities, and perhaps also to an increase in reporting to the Panel of any found.

The vast majority of records are of males singing, and evidence suggests that this is principally to attract a female, since the frequency of singing declines or even ceases after mating. Interpretation of singing is further complicated because unmated males have been proved to move considerable distances, up to 40 km or more. LAB & JTRS

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

10 localities: 1-17 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities.

BERKSHIRE One locality: one singing on 6th May.

ESSEX One locality: one singing from 13th April to mid May.

England, E Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) one singing from 14th April to 12th May; (2) seven singing sporadically in May.

Scotland, S, Mid and N & W Six sites: (1) one singing, young probably heard; (2)(3) singles singing at each; (4) call indicative of parental anxiety; (5) single, no further data supplied; (6) two males each singing for one day in May.

Although there were fewer in 1990 than in 1989 (when there was a total of 21 singing, at 14 localities), there is a very clear upward trend in recent years, mean annual numbers singing being 4.6 during 1975-79, 7.6 during 1980-84 and 9.2 during 1985-89, compared with the 17 in 1990.

The 'whiplash' song of this species is so distinctive that it is unlikely to be

ignored or overlooked by any ornithologist. It is likely, therefore, that the increase in the frequency with which Spotted Crakes are being reported does reflect a genuine increase in numbers occurring here during the summer, and probably in the numbers breeding, though that is always very difficult to prove because of the need to avoid disturbance of the birds and their habitat.

Numbers in Sweden, which holds the bulk of the West European population, have remained comparatively static, apart from annual fluctuations, averaging about 225 singing males during 1972-79 and 205 during 1986-90 (*Vår Fågelv.* 39: 237-245; 50: 27-61).

JTRS

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

13 localities: 2-26 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

AVON One locality: one seen to fly into a barley field on 28th June (cf. Avon in 1989).

England, N Four localities.

CUMBRIA Three localities: (1) one singing on 3rd May, but not subsequently; (2) one singing during 1st-16th June; (3) adult with three small chicks on 12th July.

YORKSHIRE One locality: adult and two juveniles, seen frequently.

Northern Ireland Data not yet available.

Scotland, S Three localities.

AYRSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) singles singing.

BORDERS One locality: one singing on 21st July.

Scotland, Mid Three localities.

GRAMPLAN Two localities: (1)(2) singles singing for several days at each.

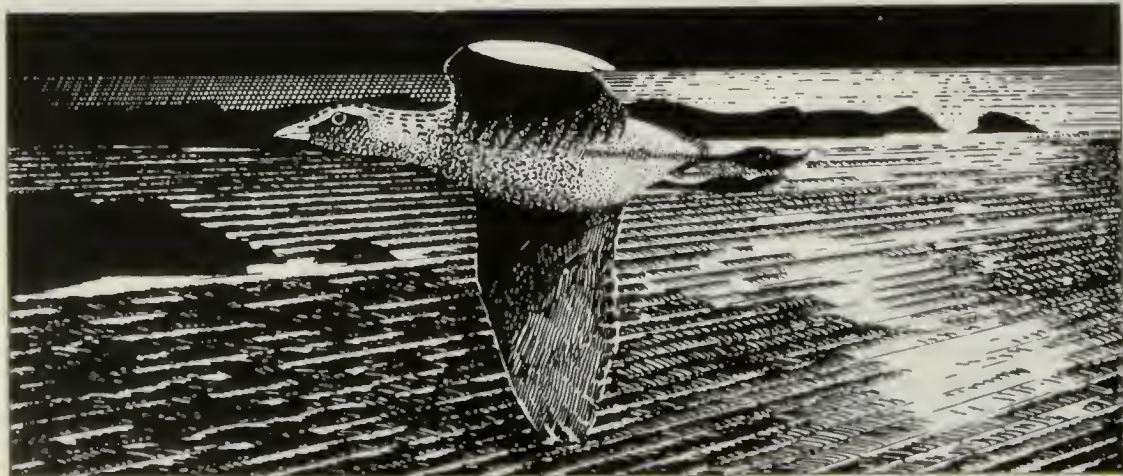
PERTSHIRE One locality: pair throughout May in the same location as in 1989.

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

ARGYLL One locality: 14 singing during 12th-14th June.

CATHNESS One locality: one singing from mid June to 19th July.

The Panel collects only those records away from the Western and Northern Isles. Those frequenting the same locality in consecutive years (see Avon and Perthshire) perhaps indicate that there is the potential for recovery, but the considerable and long-term decline, associated with intensification of agriculture, seems likely to continue unless conservation measures are instituted quickly. An innovative scheme in Northern Ireland has encouraged farmers with singing Corn Crakes to delay cutting grass until chicks are sufficiently mobile to reduce the risk of mortality from grass-cutters. The uptake of the scheme, funded by Government and administered by the RSPB, was good, but its long-term effect on the population remains to be demonstrated. The



purchase of part of the island of Coll by the RSPB and the management of this and other reserves in a ‘Corn Crake-friendly’ manner are useful steps, but radical changes to wider agriculture frameworks are needed if Corn Crakes are to regain their former abundance throughout the United Kingdom. DAS

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

United Kingdom One locality: eight present at New Year 1990, but disturbance by birdwatchers of the cranes’ favourite feeding area, together with a hard spell of weather in January, pushed them all away. Only six returned in spring. One pair made two breeding attempts and one young hatched but was believed to have been taken by Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* when ten days old.

Cranes are intolerant of disturbance. It is most unfortunate that the site, carefully protected by its sympathetic landowner, has been given unnecessary publicity. We appeal to all birdwatchers to avoid disturbing these birds in any way at any time of the year, so that this tiny population, in such a precarious position, is given every chance to become established. LAB

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

21 localities: 355-361 pairs reared at least 200 young.

England, SE & E 21 localities: (1) pair bred; (2) 18 pairs bred, with poor success; (3) 12 pairs bred, with very poor success; (4) 21 pairs reared 43 young; (5) two nests in May, eight chicks in June; (6) 13 adults plus three juveniles in June; (7) six pairs bred; (8) 23 pairs bred; (9) pair, reared no young; (10) 35 pairs bred; (11) four pairs fledged two young; (12) 49 pairs, 60 young reared (minimum of 112 free-flying young in the county concerned); (13) 11 pairs, four young reared; (14) two pairs, outcome not known; (15) Minsmere, 47 pairs, 23 young reared; (16) five pairs, outcome not known; (17)(18) single pairs, outcome not known; (19) 11 nests, outcome not known; (20) seven pairs, no further details; (21) Havergate, 98 pairs, 14 young reared. A statement from one county that ‘75 pairs reared 23 juveniles at seven coastal sites’ has not been included since it is likely that some of those seven sites have also been reported individually.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	5	5	9	9	11	14	15	18	27	24	21
Confirmed (pairs)	168	201	190	238	237	269	255	341	389	521	355
Young reared (minima)	101	155	150	192	118	245	227	315	136	150	200

When there is a ‘ribbon development’ of nests, it is difficult to decide what constitutes a separate locality. Thus, it seems possible that there was little change in the population, and that breeding success was the highest since 1987. RS

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedienemus*

Nine counties: 139-149 pairs.

England, SW Three counties: 42-48 pairs fledged a minimum of 31 young.

England, SE Two counties: six pairs fledged a total of five young.

England, E Four counties: 91-95 pairs and one unmated female fledged a minimum of 76 young.

Stone-curlews are difficult to locate and to confirm as breeding. Hence even the maxima recorded probably slightly underestimate the total number of pairs. Such errors were probably much greater in the past, before systematic surveying of Stone-curlew populations began in the late 1980s. Mark-resighting estimates of the total breeding population in Breckland (Norfolk/Suffolk), which use records of individually marked breeding birds, indicate that there

were 95 pairs in 1990 rather than the 86 located by the RSPB field team. There is now evidence that the Stone-curlew population of Breckland is stable or gradually increasing, the mark-resighting estimate for 1986 being 80 pairs. The sub-populations in north Norfolk, south Cambridgeshire/Essex, east Cambridgeshire, east Suffolk and Berkshire, however, give cause for concern, all now holding fewer than five pairs. Breeding success in Breckland and SW England was good in 1990, partly because of wardening by RSPB staff to protect nests and chicks on arable farmland from accidental destruction by farming operations. It is estimated that about 32 of the 112 young which fledged would not have done so had there been no protection measures. In Breckland, 63% of pairs made at least one breeding attempt on arable farmland, and in SW England 53% of the breeding attempts recorded were on arable land.

RHS GREEN

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Four localities: 2-8 pairs breeding (excluding those in main Scottish breeding area).

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: nest with two eggs on 20th June, outcome not known.

Scotland, S Three localities.

BORDERS Three localities: (1) pair with clutch of 3 eggs, later taken by predator; (2) seven on 5th May; (3) six on 6th May.

Since NCC field teams established that the Scottish population of this species may exceed 800 pairs, the Panel concentrates on collecting data from localities to the south of the Central Lowlands of Scotland. Doubtless, many will be birds bound for Scotland, or even Norway, but eggs are laid on southern summits in most years.

RS

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

Scotland, Mid One locality: adult in summer plumage feeding near a summit on 14th July.

No report has been received from the regularly occupied site. It would be a cause for concern if no breeding attempts were made there in 1990.

RS

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One locality: one pair breeding.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair hatched four young, but fledging not established.

This species continues to maintain a tenuous hold. There have been confirmed breeding records in all but two of the years since the first in 1978. It is, however, a difficult species for which to obtain breeding information during fieldwork, so it is probably overlooked and under-recorded.

RHS

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Eight localities: 3-15 females nesting.

England, SE Three localities.

ESSEX Three localities: (1) 1-2 in June; (2) 2-6 in June; (3) one on 16th June.

England, E Four localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: (1) one in May, but no evidence of breeding; (2) nest and 4 eggs on 20th May, and 'a second male suspicious' on 25th-26th May; (3) two reeves nested, three juveniles seen in mid July.



NORFOLK One locality: pair during breeding season.

England, N One locality.

CHESHIRE One locality: five males lekking during early March to May, five females present, but were gone by 9th May.

The best year for proved breeding since 1980. The species remains a very scarce breeder and, although in some years there may be 20-30 or more present in suitable breeding habitat for a time in spring, there is no evidence to suggest that a breeding population is firmly established in Britain. LAB

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

16 localities: 33-66 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

SOMERSET One locality: pair from April to early June and non-breeding pair from late April to mid June.

England, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: three pairs laid clutches, but all were taken by predators.

England, E Nine localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 13 pairs, seven of which bred successfully, fledging at least two young; (2) 23 pairs on territory in May, 14 pairs hatched eggs, and nine young fledged.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1) pair laid, but eggs taken by predator; (2)(3) single pairs, but nests destroyed by predators; (4) pair, but no young known.

ELSEWHERE Three localities: (1) pair attempted to breed, but failed; (2) two pairs possibly bred; (3) pair, possibly one that had failed elsewhere, arrived and displayed.

England, N One locality.

CHESHIRE One locality: up to 25 from May to late June.

Scotland, N & W Four localities.

ORKNEY One locality: pair with at least one nearly full-grown young on 15th June.

SHETLAND Three localities: (1) pair with clutch of 4 eggs found on 21st June, probably hatched on 5th July; (2) pair with clutch of 4 eggs, probably failed; (3) pair successfully reared three young.

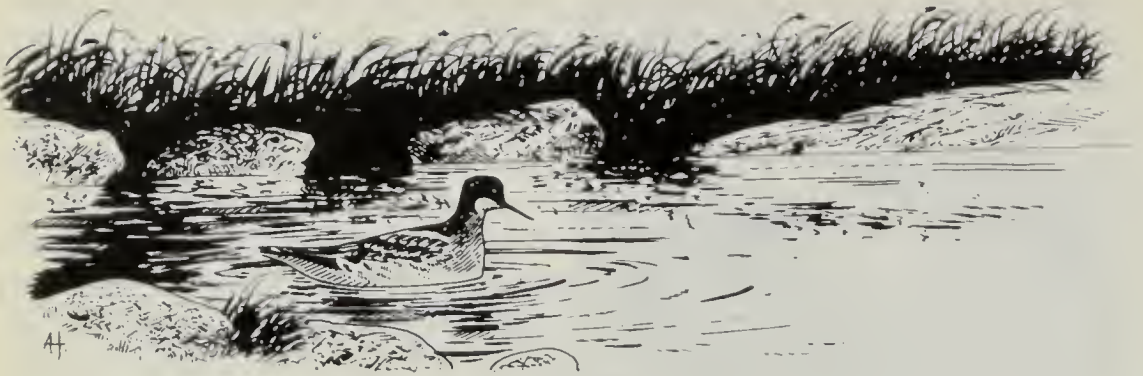
In south and east England, the population is fairly stable, with the majority at two key sites. When nesting in loose groups, Black-tailed Godwits can be very effective in deterring potential avian predators. The low breeding success of isolated pairs suggests, however, that new viable breeding groups may be difficult to establish. KWS

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) pair, and 'alarming' adults suggest hatching at least; (2) pair, but no evidence of chicks.

The lesser number of records compared with 1989 (when there were 2-6 pairs breeding, at six localities) probably represents under-recording rather than a population decline. RWS



Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Four localities: 14-18 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Four localities: (1) two females; (2) females in June, but not in July; (3) two or three pairs, but no evidence of breeding; (4) 12-13 pairs.

The situation remains unchanged since 1989, with most occurring in their Shetland stronghold. RWS

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Ten localities: 11-16 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) two pure pairs, both of which apparently failed; (2) three pure pairs, all of which failed, plus two other individuals.

England, SE Six localities: (1) pair bred, two young found when nearly three-quarters grown; (2) two pairs, one seen with nearly fledged young; (3) pair on cliffs, into July; (4) pair reared one young, which was eaten by a fox *Vulpes vulpes*; (5) pairs on 11th and 29th April, 28th May and 20th June; (6) clutch of 1 on 6th May, and another of 3 on 2nd June, but both flooded.

England, N Two localities: (1) pair with 3 eggs, taken by predator, probably by a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*; (2) pair, mating observed, female incubated for 11 days, then pair deserted clutch.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	5	4	2	6	4	3	5	3	9	5	10
Confirmed (pairs)	1	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	5	6	11
Possible (pairs)	4	3	1	6	1	5	4	2	10	3	5
Max. total (pairs)	5	6	3	8	5	8	5	3	15	9	16

Many of the pioneer colonisers formed mixed pairings in colonies of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*. No mixed pairings were reported in 1990, however, from which fact one may deduce that it is no longer difficult for Mediterranean Gulls to find mates of their own species in southern England. RS

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: one individual.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female present from 30th April to 19th August, mated to male Sandwich Tern *S. sandwicensis*; one egg laid on 7th June, but the chick died.

This individual was first discovered associating with Sandwich Terns at this site in 1984 and has returned every year since (*Brit. Birds* 84: 369). RS

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

15 localities: 93-124 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities.

ISLES OF SCILLY Two localities: (1) pair from 11th June to 30th July, when seen with one young; (2) pair during 4th-30th June.

England, SE Two localities: (1) one or two pairs, but young died soon after hatching; (2) single adults on 13th May, 15th and 20th June, pair in colony of Common Terns *S. hirundo* on 18th May.

England, N Three localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2) five pairs bred; (3) 23 pairs, plus four re-lays, 28 young, of which 19 fledged.

Wales Three localities: (1) seven pairs laid, hatching 28 young, of which two fledged; (2) maximum of 34 clutches, but predation by gulls *Larus* resulted in no young fledging; (3) three pairs on 15th June.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) 21 pairs, of which 17 bred, laying 28 eggs and fledging 20 young; (2) two in a tern colony for several days.

Northern Ireland Three localities: (1) 19 pairs; (2) three pairs; (3) one pair.

A serious drop in numbers at UK colonies in 1990, but this probably reflects a shift of part of the population to one of the major colonies in Ireland.

KWS

Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*

One locality: one individual.

England, SE One locality: an individual identified as this form summered, for the eighth consecutive year, in a colony of Little Terns *S. albifrons*.

This is the first time that this North American form, closely related to (and formerly regarded as conspecific with) Little Tern, has featured in the Panel's annual reports. Presumably this individual winters with European Little Terns. (The identification of this individual is still under consideration by the Rarities Committee, and will in due course also be assessed by the BOU Records Committee.)

RS

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One locality: two females.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: two females, one of which laid an unfertilised egg, which was found crushed at the second visit.

Snowy Owls ended their nine-year run of breeding in Shetland in 1975, since when only females have been present. Unless a male finds them soon, they may grow too old to breed, or too set in their ways. Permanent colonisation of an area this far south must be unlikely, but further sporadic breeding is always a possibility.

RS & CJB

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: pair displaying on 10th May, not seen subsequently.

England, Central One locality.

WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: male singing from at least 24th to 30th May.

In 1977, four pairs nested, in Avon, Somerset, Surrey and Sussex (*Brit. Birds* 72: 375), but since then there has not been a single instance of confirmed breeding. None was reported to the Panel in 1989 or 1987, and 1985 was the last time that even possible breeding was reported from two localities. This

species is likely to remain a sporadic breeder here, relying for its occasional 'good' years on a large spring influx followed by a dry, warm summer. *JTRS*

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Six localities: 0-6 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities.

ESSEX Two localities: (1) one on 13th May; (2) one on 16th June.

England, E One locality.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE One locality: one singing on 6th June only.

England, Central Two localities.

SHROPSHIRE One locality: one singing on 13th May.

WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: one seen and heard from 1st June to at least 24th August.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

GRAMPIAN One locality: male singing on several days in a new area.

The above reports of 'males' have been taken at face value, but it should be noted that, as with other woodpeckers, both sexes sing (or drum).

More than one pair confirmed breeding has not been recorded in the UK since the four pairs in 1978, following seven pairs the previous year; none was proved for four years during 1981-84, then single pairs each year until the blank in 1990.

Although noisy when newly arrived or when unpaired, singing ceases very soon after nesting starts, so the 'disappearance' of a 'noisy migrant' deserves careful investigation in case a pair of this well-camouflaged and surreptitious breeder is quietly getting on with the job of procreation. *JTRS*

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

64-336 pairs breeding.

England, SW 14-129 pairs breeding.

CORNWALL One locality: male singing in last week of May.

DEVON Five localities: (1)-(5) total of two pairs proved breeding and three pairs probably breeding.

DORSET Six localities: 22 pairs (four proved and 18 probably breeding).

HAMPSHIRE RSPB survey estimated 60 pairs in the New Forest; 40 pairs at eight localities elsewhere.

WILTSHIRE One locality: pair feeding young.

England, SE 22-36 pairs breeding.

BERKSHIRE Five localities: (1)-(5) total of six pairs (three proved, two probably and one possibly breeding).

ESSEX One locality: pair raised young.

KENT One locality: single 'around for some time'.

SURREY 11 localities: (1)-(11) total of 22 pairs (nine proved, six probably and seven possibly breeding).

SUSSEX Three localities: four pairs proved to breed.

England, E 27-168 pairs breeding.

LINCOLNSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) three pairs proved to breed and four pairs possibly breeding.

NORFOLK One locality: 14 pairs proved to breed and 34 probably breeding.

SUFFOLK Ten localities: (1)-(10) total of ten pairs proved to breed and 103 probably breeding.

England, Central One to three pairs breeding.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: pair proved to breed and two pairs possibly breeding.

The totals for SW and E England are both significantly higher than those in 1989, but this probably reflects the increased coverage resulting from two special surveys.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

50 localities: 28-74 pairs breeding.

England, SE 26 localities.

BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) male singing on 3rd April; (2) male singing on 18th May.

ESSEX Four localities: (1) three pairs bred; (2) three males singing several times, almost certainly bred; (3) pair bred; (4) male in June.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: pair bred.

KENT Six localities: (1) male singing in June; (2) male singing in August; (3) pair bred; (4) pair reared four young; (5) one on 12th July, very agitated on 25th July, presumed to have bred; (6) two pairs, three broods reared.

LONDON One locality: male singing on one date in June.

MIDDLESEX One locality: male singing on 6th May, regarded as 'probable breeding' as the species bred there in 1989.

SURREY Nine localities: (1) pair in June; (2) pair in late April; (3) pair bred; (4) one on 30th April; (5) pair bred; (6) pair with two juveniles on 22nd May; (7) male singing on 24th April; (8) many sightings, at least one probable breeding pair; (9) two females or juveniles on 25th May.

SUSSEX Two localities: (1) male singing on 3rd May; (2) male singing throughout April and May.

England, E 12 localities.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE One locality: subsong at a former site, on one date only.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: at least two females and a male, two broods reported to have fledged during 17th-22nd June.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1) unpaired male in late July and August; (2) pair fledged young; (3) pair fledged young and an additional four singing males; (4) unpaired male in May and June.

SUFFOLK Six localities: (1) pair probably bred; (2) two pairs bred; (3) pair probably bred; (4) two pairs bred; (5) pair possibly bred; (6) three pairs bred and an additional three pairs probably bred.

England, Central Nine localities.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair bred, young fledging by end of May.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: single male, but no females.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: male seen.

WEST MIDLANDS Six localities: (1) male singing from April to June, plus a female on 25th May, two males on 30th May, young seen; (2) pair on 11th April, male singing; (3) pair on 11th June, female posturing and soliciting; (4) sub-adult male singing on 10th June; (5) sub-adult male singing on 23rd April; (6) male singing on 21st June, probably having moved from one of the other West Midland sites.

England, N One locality.

YORKSHIRE One locality: three pairs each reared at least one brood.

Wales One locality: female or first-summer male.

Scotland, S One locality.

LOTHIANS One locality: male on 13th July and unsexed individual on 20th September.

Reported numbers of birds, and of localities occupied, have fallen by almost 50% since the species was reinstated as a Panel species in 1986. We believe that this reflects a genuine decline in numbers, but also believe the species to be seriously under-reported. We urge birdwatchers to report to the relevant county recorders *all* Black Redstarts seen in likely breeding habitats during April to September.

JJDG

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

12 localities: 5-12 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: one on 12th June 'schaking' and reluctant to leave the area.

England, N Four localities.

NORTHUMBERLAND Three localities: (1) one on 9th June; (2) one collecting food, presumably for nestlings or fledglings, on 9th June; (3) one in May and June, followed by four young on 16th July.

YORKSHIRE One locality: five eggs laid from which three young reared.

Wales One locality: one giving alarm calls on one date in early July.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS Two localities: (1) one on 14th June; (2) one singing on 15th May.

Scotland, Mid Two localities.

GRAMPIAN Two localities: (1) pair in suitable habitat throughout the season; (2) pair with young.

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

GATHNESS One locality: two displaying on 4th April.

SUTHERLAND One locality: brood of five on 29th June, of which four were ringed.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	5	6	7	10	4	3	2	7	7	12	12
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	2	3	5
Possible (pairs)	4	6	5	9	4	3	0	6	5	10	7
Max. total (pairs)	5	6	7	12	4	3	2	7	7	13	12

With five pairs proved breeding, this was the best year yet for Fieldfares in the UK, the previous highest total being four in 1977. With over 700 pairs of this migrant species breeding as close to southern England as the Netherlands (*Brit. Birds* 84: 233), increases and range expansion throughout much of Europe over recent decades and almost continuous presence here as a breeding bird since the first (in Orkney) as long ago as 1967 (*Scot. Birds* 5: 31-32), establishment is tantalisingly slow and cannot yet be regarded as firm. JTRS

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

17 localities: 6-21 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Central Three localities.

MORAY/NAIRN One locality: one singing on 19th May.

PERTSHIRE Two localities: (1) one in full song on 11th May, not heard on 20th May; (2) one singing on 20th May, possibly a second, silent, individual with it.

Scotland, N & W 15 sites.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Two localities: (1) two pairs 'alarming' in late May, one nest with well-feathered young; (2) male singing, pair not seen, but nest found.

SHEFFIELD Ten sites: (1)-(10) singles at each, seven of them singing, but no evidence of breeding.

SUTHERLAND Three localities: (1) pair with four eggs; (2) pair, hatched eggshell found on ground, but nest not located; (3) songs from three different woods on 12th May, an egg found on 2nd May.

Fewer individuals and localities were reported in 1990 than in any year since 1981. The recent peak was in 1984, when there were 31-79 pairs breeding. The Redwing is, however, a seriously under-recorded species, which can be heard singing in many parts of north and west Scotland from which the Panel receives few formal reports. Two ornithologists who searched extensively for this species in the early 1980s produced much higher numbers than were reported before or since. JJDG

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

99 localities: 19-345 pairs breeding.

England, SW 62 localities in eight counties: 15-284 pairs breeding.

England, SE 12 localities in six counties: 2-19 pairs breeding.

England, E 22 localities in five counties: 1-34 pairs breeding.

Wales Three localities in two counties: 1-8 pairs breeding.



	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. counties	11	16	12	13	13	13	11	14	14	15	21
Confirmed (pairs)	19	56	29	90	78	59	4	31	24	12	19
Possible (pairs)	179	106	173	157	238	190	175	156	174	196	326
Max. total (pairs)	198	162	202	247	316	249	179	187	198	208	345

A succession of mild winters has evidently enabled this species to flourish, with the highest-ever maximum population. This has been achieved without the once-thriving Kentish population, although, after a lapse of several years, one pair did establish territory in Kent. There can be little doubt that the milder counties of southwest England and southern Wales provide the most suitable conditions for the species in Britain. RS

Savi’s Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Five localities: 1-10 pairs breeding.

England, E Five localities.

NORFOLK One locality: one singing male.

SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) at least four singing males; (2) up to three singing males in April.

ELSEWHERE Two localities: (1) one singing throughout the season; (2) female ringed on 17th June had a brood patch (a singing male was present there in 1989).

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	14	8	11	12	10	12	9	16	10	13	5
Confirmed (pairs)	2	5	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Possible (pairs)	27	10	18	15	12	14	11	20	13	17	9
Max. total (pairs)	29	15	18	17	12	15	12	20	13	17	10

A poor year, but all the birds were in that part of the country traditionally associated with Savi’s Warblers. To judge by numbers of some of the common species, migrants may have had a very difficult spring passage north. RS

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

12 localities: 13-24 pairs breeding.

England, SE Eight localities: (1) pair bred; (2) one singing on 20th May; (3) one singing on 5th June; (4) one singing during 21st-28th June; (5) three males singing on 27th May, one singing on 29th May, one carrying nest material; (6) seven males singing on 30th May, five males singing on 4th June, five pairs successful and two pairs probably so; (7) pair bred and a second male on 10th June; (8) singing male from 28th May to at least 31st May.

England, E One locality: one singing from 27th May to 6th June.

England, Central Three localities.

WORCESTERSHIRE Three localities: (1) two pairs, one fledging five young, nest of the other pair possibly destroyed by predator; (2) pair bred, nest destroyed by predator, probably by wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*; (3) three pairs each fledged three young.

	1980	1981*	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	9	3	26	26	28	23	18	11	13	10	12
Confirmed (pairs)	2	0	2	3	4	2	12	10	6	11	13
Possible (pairs)	57	3	72	53	47	40	16	11	14	11	11
Max. total (pairs)	59	3	74	56	51	42	28	21	20	22	24

*The 1981 totals omit Worcestershire, then still the main population centre for this species.

An encouraging year, marked by a modest return of the species to its traditional haunts in Worcestershire, where 50-60 pairs persisted through the 1970s, but had decreased to 7-9 pairs by 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 239-256). Meanwhile, the population in SE England continues to hold its own, and even to thrive. The table shows that more pairs were proved to breed in the UK in 1990 than at any time in the previous decade. RS & CJB

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Two localities: two individuals.

England, SE One locality.

BERKSHIRE One locality: voluble singing male from 22nd May to 16th June (*Brit. Birds* 85: 539).

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: singing male during 12th-20th June (*Brit. Birds* 84: 492).

1984 HUMBERSIDE One locality: singing male from 19th May to at least 1st June (*Brit. Birds* 79: 571).

Spring vagrant Great Reed Warblers often sing from their reedbed habitat for a day or two, and such records are not noted in these annual reports. Sometimes, however, an individual takes up territory and remains for a longer period, and these records are included by us. It is probable that they almost always refer to unmated lone males, but such occurrences are likely to be the prelude if breeding does ever take place in the UK. There were one or two such long-staying singing males in six of the seven years 1975-81 (leading to high expectations of eventual colonisation), but then two blank years until the one in 1984 (above), followed by a five-year gap until these two in 1990. Perhaps the sudden silence of a singing male should not necessarily be assumed to indicate his departure; maybe, in one year, a female Great Reed Warbler will have heard his song . . .

JTRS

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

55-928 pairs breeding.

England, SW County maxima:

CORNWALL 1, DORSET 334, HAMPSHIRE 441, ISLE OF WIGHT 7, WILTSHIRE 1, ANOTHER 16.

England, SE County maxima:

SURREY 120, SUSSEX 8.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. counties	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	8	6	5	8
Confirmed (pairs)	19	50	8	14	11	26	15	8	26	23	55
Possible (pairs)	258	69	304	134	429	368	293	239	616	499	873
Max. total (pairs)	277	119	312	148	440	394	308	247	639	522	928

This is by far the highest total ever reported. The term 'locality' is not appropriate for this species, for whereas some reports are of a single pair others are for broad areas (e.g. 'New Forest'). Without map references for every pair, there is always a risk that some pairs will be counted twice, once as an individual pair, and once as part of the population of a wider area. Even allowing for this possibility, there is no reason to doubt that the population reached record levels in 1990.

RS

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

48 localities: 9-97 pairs breeding.

England, SW 13 localities.

DEVON Two localities: (1) pair proved breeding; (2) pair probably breeding.

DORSET One locality: pair bred successfully.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: approximately five pairs.

HAMPSHIRE Five localities: (1) New Forest, at least 19 pairs or singing males; (2)-(5) single males singing.

SOMERSET Two localities: (1) three singing males; (2) male on 12th and 15th July.

WILTSHIRE Two localities: (1) two singing on 6th May, three on 7th May; (2) two singing on 25th June, at least one pair bred later.

England, SE 21 localities.

BEDFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) one singing on 25th May and 2nd June; (2) one singing on 28th and 29th May.

BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) one singing, date not supplied; (2) singing male on 14th March, and from 16th April to 24th May, pair on 29th April and 2nd May.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Four localities: (1) one singing on 28th May; (2) one singing on 27th May; (3) one singing from 7th May to end of the month; (4) ten territories, one brood seen and one other young seen.

ESSEX Four localities: (1)-(4) singles singing on 1st, 10th and 27th May and 'in May', respectively.

MIDDLESEX Two localities: (1) female on 6th April and male during 9th-12th April; (2) singing male on 26th March.

SURREY Five localities: (1) male holding territory; (2) one seen feeding juvenile Goldcrest *R. regulus*; (3) one singing on 15th May; (4) male held territory in April and one other present; (5) singing male.

SUSSEX One locality: one singing on 28th April.

England, E Three localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: one in conifer plantation on 21st July.

NORFOLK One locality: pair from 23rd May to 18th July, one well-grown juvenile, probably two, possibly more, on 18th July.

SUFFOLK One locality: female and two males present in late May.

England, Central One locality.

WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: one singing in third week of April.

England, N Two localities.

LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) male in breeding condition, ringed on 16th June; (2) one singing on 1st and 2nd May, a second may have been present.

Wales Eight localities.

GWENT Six localities: (1) song from 29th April to 27th May, two on 28th April and 1st May; (2) 12 singing, fledged young in three areas; (3)-(6) singles singing on 24th March, 13th April, 5th May and 22nd May, respectively.

GWYNEDD One locality: two, including singing male, on 15th March.

RADNORSHIRE One locality: one singing in May, probably feeding young later.

This species remains volatile in numbers each year: presumably the size of the population reaching Britain each year is affected by spring weather. The year 1990 experienced a poor spring and this affected a number of common migrants and may have reduced the number of Firecrests arriving here.

Although numbers have been generally higher and the distribution more widespread in the 1980s than in the 1970s, when the species was discovered to breed in localities outside the New Forest where it was first discovered in 1961, numbers now appear to have levelled off. The averages were 3-46 pairs breeding in 1973-79 and 8-85 during 1980-89, compared with the 9-97 in 1990.

LAB

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

One locality: one individual.

England, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: male from 21st April to 1st May (*Brit. Birds* 85: 546), during which time he built one nest and three-quarters finished a second.

With the species still extending its range in western Europe, and turning up more frequently in Britain (ten in 1990, compared with only 37 previously), one may hope that it will soon breed here regularly.

RS



Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

38 localities: 10-42 pairs breeding.

England, SW Three localities: (1) male on 17th May; (2) male, seen and heard, on 27th May; (3) pair present, but no young reared.

England, SE Seven localities: (1) pair and an additional male in late May; (2) male singing on 29th May; (3) male on 6th May; (4) one singing in May; (5) two males singing, no date reported; (6) three males and a female on 16th May; (7) an immature male during 22nd-31st May.

England, E 27 localities: (1) pair bred, three young ringed; (2) pair bred, but nest failed; (3) pair fledged two young; (4) singing male, but could have been from an adjacent site; (5) one heard on 29th May, seen on 30th June; (6) three pairs bred; (7) first-summer male on 24th June; (8) one singing in late May and early June; (9) pair probably bred; (10) male heard briefly on 7th June; (11) male, not far from a former breeding area; (12) male calling on 31st May; (13) at least four pairs bred and six pairs summered; (14) pair probably bred; (15) pair fledged at least one young; (16) male singing on 5th May and 5th June, one pair bred, second pair probably bred; (17) pair fledged at least one young; (18) pair fledged two young; (19) one singing on 28th May, 5th and 16th June; (20)(21) single pairs probably bred; (22) male singing in May; (23) pair bred; (24) pair probably bred and a second male present; (25) female and three males on 20th May, one pair bred; (26) pair fledged at least two young; (27) three calling in suitable habitat on 19th May.

England, N One locality: male sang continually on 22nd May, seen on 22nd June, when flew to another individual, presumed female.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	17	13	12	14	11	12	13	22	35	29	38
Confirmed (pairs)	2	4	3	2	4	4	5	11	16	15	10
Possible (pairs)	26	22	18	19	14	11	11	20	25	22	32
Max. total (pairs)	28	26	21	21	18	15	16	31	41	37	42

The diligence of the Golden Oriole Group, to whom the Panel is much indebted, must be partly responsible for the increased numbers of individuals and localities reported, but there is also evidence of a genuine increase in numbers.

RS & JJDG

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Seven localities: 1-8 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality: female on 28th May.

England, E Four localities: (1) male from 16th May to 30th June, a second male and a female

on 23rd May; (2)-(4) single males on 22nd May, 31st May and 16th June, respectively.

Scotland, S One locality: male sang throughout 20th May, but did not stay.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair successfully fledged one young, despite the fact that the male disappeared.

The number of confirmed pairs declined relentlessly from 172 pairs known in 1960 (*Bird Study* 9: 198-216), and 48-64 pairs breeding as recently as 1977, to zero in 1989, when there were only six instances of possible breeding, in three counties. It would be nice to think that 1990 marked a turning point in the species' fortunes, but the decline is widespread in the more maritime parts of western Europe, so there is little room for optimism. Goriup & Batten (1990, *Oryx* 24 (4): 215-223) remarked that 'the species appears to be doing well in those parts of Europe which are exposed to a drier or more continental climate', but this has not been reflected in better performance in Britain during recent, drought-stricken years.

JJDG

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
One locality: one individual.

England, E One locality.
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: pair seen and heard at the end of May.

There was a time in the early 1980s when it looked as though this species was becoming a regular, established breeder, but not so now.

With 50,000-2,000,000 wintering in Britain, it is perhaps surprising that more do not stay on to breed, at least in some years. The huge influx to the Merseyside area in winter 1980/81, with one roost containing up to 20,000 at a time and perhaps being used by 150,000 individuals over the winter (*BTO News* 114: 9), did not, however, lead to an increase in breeding numbers in summer 1981; indeed, that year was one of the worst in the past two decades, with only one pair confirmed breeding, whereas the following year provided the peak, with 2-10 pairs breeding.

With its close congener commonly occupying all likely Brambling nesting localities, it is far more likely that an itinerant individual will meet and hybridise with a Chaffinch *F. coelebs* than that it will chance upon a second Brambling of the opposite sex. That may perhaps be the key to the species' failure to become established here, although it is surprising that its wheezy notes, recalling Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, are not detected more often in our northern forests. Perhaps they *too* closely resemble Greenfinch, and are overlooked?

JTRS

European Serin *Serinus serinus*
Two localities: 1-2 pairs.

England, SW Two localities.
CORNWALL Two localities: (1) pair held territory in a rural garden from 5th to 22nd May; (2) male held territory from 23rd May to 15th July.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	1	3	5	7	4	5	2	4	6	1	2
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	1	4	6	5	3	5	3	5	9	1	2
Max. total (pairs)	1	6	7	7	5	6	3	5	9	1	2

Over the years, most of the records of summering Serins have come from the southwest of England (especially Devon, whence we have received no report for 1990), so the two Cornish records conform to a pattern. RS

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Three localities: 1-3 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

ARGYLL One locality: pair, including a first-summer male.

CAITHNESS One locality: singing male on 29th May.

SHETLAND One locality: pair hatched four eggs and fledged three or four.

The only known nesting since the first, in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 133-135). Before the well-known events of summer 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 646), Robert Spencer wrote: 'At present the prospects for colonising Scarlet Rosefinches look better than those for—say—Serin *Serinus serinus*.' It has, however, taken a long time, the English Channel and the North Sea apparently acting as unexpectedly efficient barriers. The range expansion on the Continent is well known, with extension right to the shores nearest to Britain in 1987, first breeding occurring then on Heligoland, Germany, and in the Netherlands; the Dutch population had increased to 15 pairs by 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 11). Breeding pairs can be surprisingly inconspicuous, are easily overlooked and are so catholic in their choice of nesting site that suitable habitat must be widespread. Next year's report will reveal what may be the first real surge towards establishment. A paper by D. I. M. Wallace, outlining the species' European expansion and initial stages of colonisation of Britain, is in preparation for *British Birds*. JTRS

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

17 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid and N & W 17 pairs are known to have bred successfully, producing well-grown broods at least.

This total does not represent a complete census for this species. RWS

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

94 localities: 48-133 pairs breeding.

England, SW

CORNWALL Two localities: (1) pair in March, male in song; (2) pair in June and August.

DEVON 91 localities: (1)-(91) totals of 48 pairs proved, 52 probably and 30 possibly breeding.

SOMERSET One locality: male from 30th June until 3rd July.

The Cirl Bunting is the subject of a detailed research and monitoring programme by the RSPB, in collaboration with the Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society, and the Panel is indebted to Dr Andy Evans for furnishing precise details of the Devon population. The welcome increase in numbers in 1990 may, to some extent, be the result of more-complete coverage and better knowledge of the whereabouts of the birds. The range is now almost entirely restricted to a small area of Devon. ATWS



Reviews

Grouse in Space and Time: the population biology of a managed gamebird. By Peter J. Hudson. Game Conservancy, Fordingbridge, 1992. 63 colour plates; 61 line-drawings. £25.00.

Over nine million acres of upland Britain are maintained in a highly artificial state through heather burning, predator control and restrictions on public access so that a small number of people can shoot approximately 450,000 Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* each year. An equally important statistic is that the annual income generated by encouraging this indigenous bird to live at unnaturally high densities solely so that the surplus production can be shot is some £31.5 million, an amount which benefits not just the owners of the land, but also the communities of the mostly remote areas involved. The long-term decline in grouse numbers this century, with a major acceleration in the 1970s, prompted this detailed study which, it is hoped, would come up with some explanations and, preferably, some remedies.

The Game Conservancy's Red Grouse Research Team, ably led by Peter Hudson, has produced this extremely detailed examination of the Red Grouse, its economics, management, population biology, behaviour, diseases, predators and food supply. Some grouse-moor owners have confessed that it is all a bit too scientific for them, but the numerous graphs, histograms and tables are set amidst a very readable text, while the colour photographs illustrate almost every aspect of Red Grouse and moorland.

Grouse-moor owners and keepers have long accused the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* of being a major predator of Red Grouse, especially their chicks, making this the excuse for massive persecution, which still goes on in several areas despite decades of supposedly total protection. The section in this book dealing with this shows that moors with harriers produce an average 17% fewer young grouse than moors without, the effect being inversely linked with grouse density, so that on high-density moors the number of chicks taken by harriers is relatively unimportant.

The conclusion of the study is that predation by foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and crows (Corvidae) is much more significant than that by Hen Harriers. There is also a need for better management of the heather, with more careful burning and a better balance of grazing by sheep and red deer *Cervus elaphus*. The former additionally carry ticks, which pass the very serious disease louping ill to the grouse, causing substantial mortality in some years, while the latter, the Scottish population of which is over 350,000, are in urgent need of severe reduction if not just grouse moors but also other areas of upland Britain are not to be further degraded.

A fascinating and important book, deserving to be read by a far wider audience than just grouse-moor owners and keepers.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

Here I Am—Where Are You?: the behaviour of the Greylag Goose. By Konrad Lorenz. HarperCollins, London, 1992. 238 pages. 40 colour plates; 96 black-and-white plates. £16.99.

This is Konrad Lorenz's last book—a summing-up of his lifetime's study of the behaviour of the Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, incorporating the findings of the long line of collaborators whom he inspired to follow his pioneering work in developing the concept of ethology, studying the behaviour of animals in their natural environment.

Although the text is a mixture of anecdote and detailed scientific account, it is by no means easy reading in some places, and a few purchasers may be disappointed that it is not as accessible as some of his earlier and highly popular books. That said, the book provides a fascinating insight into the way in which Lorenz developed his ideas, about both the behaviour of the Greylags themselves and the ways in which it can be compared with parallel behaviour by human beings.

The illustrations are apposite and informative, and my only quibble is with the daft price. It is worth all of £17.00.

MALCOLM OGILVIE



Letters

The Cape Clear 'Griffons' The difficulty which Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* have in maintaining flapping flight for substantial periods over the sea makes it highly improbable that the five unidentified eagle-like birds observed flying past Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 1st September 1965 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 186) could have been of that species.

I have, however, recently had occasion to look again at the evidence (*Cape Clear Bird Observatory Report* 7: 16-17) and Dr C. J. Henty's comments (*Cape Clear Bird Observatory Bull.* 37: 3-5). It must be admitted that the Griffon identification is by far the most likely, given the sociable nature of vultures and the implausibility of five White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* turning up together.

Griffon Vultures seem to be increasing in Spain, so, if the Henty theory is correct, we may not have to wait too long before circumstances repeat themselves.

E. F. J. GARCIA

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Taxonomic status of the Red Grouse There are good reasons for the differing taxonomic treatments of the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* and the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus scoticus*, contrary to the impression given by John Parker (*Brit. Birds* 85: 680). The sympatric breeding of *L. scotica* and *L. curvirostris* (*Ibis* 132: 454-466) prevent their treatment as conspecific. On the other hand, recent research into *variegatus* has shown that at least three isolated populations of *Lagopus lagopus* living in relatively mild climates on islands off the coast of Norway have independently acquired partly or heavily pigmented winter plumage, increased pigmentation of the otherwise year-round white feathers and retardation of the winter moult (*Fauna norv. Ser. C, Cinclus* 12: 79-99). This suggests that populations of *Lagopus lagopus* readily show local differentiation and supports the argument that the Red Grouse is best treated as a race of that species. No change of status is anticipated at present by the BOURC. This, however, in no way detracts from the biological interest of the distinctive, isolated grouse populations of Britain and Ireland.

Bearing in mind the logo of the magazine, we can understand that the editors of *British Birds* might wish to see the Red Grouse elevated once more to full species. We wonder if substantial sponsorship of the BOURC Taxonomic Sub-committee by *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky might influence any future decision?

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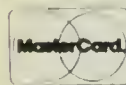
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Monthly marathon

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Notes

Black-headed Gulls foraging behind motor vehicle On 18th October 1989, while returning from Hilbre Island across the sands to West Kirby, on the Wirral, Cheshire, I noticed a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* following our *Land Rover*. Keeping between the tyre tracks and about 60 cm above the sand, its flight alternated between glides of up to ten seconds' duration and intermittent bouts of hurried wing-flapping. Its head was at all times held noticeably downwards, and, on the few occasions when it alighted and pecked at the sand, small food items might have been eaten. It remained with us for about three minutes, and at one point was joined by a second Black-headed Gull which adopted an identical flight action for half a minute, the two wheeling away as we gained the foreshore. Presumably, the vibrations caused by the *Land Rover* simulated the turn of the tide, or perhaps rain, bringing to the surface food items which the gulls had learnt to exploit.

P. I. MORRIS

Caughall Farmhouse Cottage, Caughall Road, Upton-by-Chester, Cheshire CH2 4BW

Dr J. J. M. Flegg has commented that 'The gulls appear to have been using the *Land Rover* wheels as automated foot-pattering, which is quite different from the "old routine" of investigating overturned soil (as, for example, when following the plough).' We are not aware of any comparable records. EDS

Common and Black-headed Gulls plunge-diving after leaves On 2nd November 1989, while walking alongside the River Dee at low tide at Chester, Cheshire, I noticed two Common Gulls *Larus canus* and five Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* plunge-diving into the river. First, one of the Common Gulls dived into the shallows, and soon the others joined in, all of them bringing individual yellow leaves of willow *Salix* and poplar *Populus* to the surface in their bills. After vigorous head-shaking, tossing the leaves and retrieving them, or diving after others, they eventually moved into deeper water. During these dives, the gulls submerged totally apart from their wing-tips, and brought beakfuls of muddy, black and decaying leaf litter to the surface. At this point, they appeared quite frenzied, diving time and again, spinning on the water and chasing other gulls with leaves, in a playful piratical fashion, until the leaves were discarded. At one stage, a Black-headed Gull chased a Common Gull which had retrieved a matchbox from the river bottom. I watched the activity for ten minutes, before leaving.

P. I. MORRIS

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It seems likely that the gulls, since they kept up this behaviour, were also obtaining food with the leaves, while at the same time indulging in an element of 'play'. EDS

Whiskered Terns feeding behind plough On 17th March 1989, near Doñana National Park, Spain, I watched about 50 Whiskered Terns *Chlidonias hybridus*, all but one in full summer plumage, feeding behind a plough. Rain had moistened the soil, and there was a gentle breeze and overcast sky. At 15.43 GMT, 23 terns that had been on the ground while the tractor was idle flew to it when it moved; by 15.48 hours, at least 43 were following the plough, joined by four more at 15.52. They called frequently, hovered mostly just behind the plough, and often dived near to one another in quick succession. When the tractor was idle, the terns dispersed, and called less; some, flying higher (3.5 m), patrolled along the furrows, diving less frequently to feed. All feeding was done while flying; during brief periods on the ground, the terns appeared to be resting. Three Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* with the terns were not seen to feed; also on the ploughed area, there were two Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and 28 feeding Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*. On a later visit, near dusk, when ploughing had ceased, all terns, egrets and gulls had gone. Three days later, up to five Whiskered Terns present at 17.04 hours associated little with the plough and fed rarely: it was dry, windy, clear and sunny, and presumably fewer invertebrate prey were uncovered by the plough.

BWP (vol. 4) does not mention Whiskered Terns following the plough.

I acknowledge the support provided to me by CSIC-CICYT.

A. M. JONES

Fiodhag, Dell Road, Nethybridge, Inverness-shire PH25 3DL

Barn Swallows roosting in maize From early August 1989, on the eastern edge of the built-up area of Sandbach, Cheshire, AAF noted the development of a hirundine roost in a field of maize *Zea mays*. Initially, only 200-300 individuals (perhaps those which had nested in the immediate area) were using this roost, but by mid September several thousands were roosting each night in the field. On 18th September, DE checked a regular roost site in bulrushes *Typha* on the western outskirts of the built-up area. No hirundines were visible in the immediate vicinity, although the 'twittering' of a pre-roost gathering could be heard some way off: about 10,000 Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were soon located, performing their pre-roost acrobatics over a large maize field about 400 m away, and were seen to drop into the maize to roost. This suggests a preference for the maize over the bulrush used in previous years. On the same night, AAF observed a similar number of hirundines entering the roost on the eastern outskirts, giving a total of some 20,000 or more at the two sites. On 19th September, numbers at the eastern roost had fallen dramatically to only 2,000-3,000, and the decline was rapidly completed, reflecting the reduced numbers in the general area.

Other regular Barn Swallow roosts in Cheshire, notably at Woolston (Warrington), Acre Nook SQ (Chelford), Frodsham marshes and Stanlow oil-refinery, all in bulrush-beds, had either already dispersed earlier in the autumn or had not been used at all in 1989.

BWP (vol. 5) refers to the use of maize by Barn Swallows and Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* for roosting, both on autumn passage and in winter quarters, but the only British reference relates to an observation made in Wiltshire in 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 393). R. E. Youngman (*Brit. Birds* 70: 393) described similar

events in the Dordogne, France, and added that, with the increasing planting of maize in Britain, 'there must be a strong possibility of this habit spreading'. We would suggest that this is now the case in Cheshire, and it would be interesting to know of any similar observations elsewhere in Britain and whether they are increasing in frequency.

ANTHONY A. FORD and DENNIS ELPHICK
48 Brookland Drive, Sandbach, Crewe, Cheshire CW11 0LX

Blackbird catching mayflies in air from perch On 13th May 1990, at Motisfont, Hampshire, I saw a female Blackbird *Turdus merula* perched on the bare branches of a dead tree overhanging the River Test. There was a large emergence of mayflies (Ephemeroptera) at the time, and the Blackbird was seen to fly out in the manner of a flycatcher (Muscicapidae) and gather these insects. When it had collected several in its beak, it flew off to a nearby nest to feed its young; a few minutes later, it reappeared and performed in the same way. I watched it for 20-25 minutes, during which time it caught many mayflies. Although *BLP* (vol. 5) includes mayflies in the diet of Blackbirds, it does not mention this method being used to catch them, nor can I find any reference to this behaviour in the literature available to me. A. M. SNOOK

16 Emmett Road, Rowenhams, Southampton, Hampshire SO1 8JB

Dr C. J. Bibby has observed Blackbirds catching craneflies (Tipulidae) in this way; and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock notes that Blackbirds occasionally fly *upwards* from the ground to catch large flying insects, but that he has not observed them flycatching from a perch. EDS

Curious behaviour of Goldcrest At about 07.45 GMT on 18th March 1990, from the kitchen of my former house in Nutfield, Surrey, I saw a male Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* moving about on the windowbox immediately outside the window. After watching it for about half a minute, I realised that, although it was continuously moving over a very restricted area of the box, it was not feeding; its restless movements, mainly up and over and down one particular geranium *Pelargonium*, were all within a compass of about 20 cm, but close examination confirmed that it was not caught on anything. After a few minutes, I called my wife to come and see this ceaseless performance. She was as puzzled as I was, and, leaving her watching, I fetched my camera. During the next ten minutes, I obtained 20 photographs from reasonably close range (plate 19). Twice the Goldcrest dropped down below the level of the window to the soil in the windowbox, and once it dropped down and clung to the sill, facing the window, but on each occasion it flew up within two or three seconds and resumed its movements around the geranium head; at no time did it feed. I wondered whether it was attracted by its own reflection in the window; its crest appeared to be slightly raised at times, but it did not peck at the window or touch the glass. After a further ten minutes (at 08.10 hours), it dropped down to the soil in the box and then flew into a hydrangea *Hydrangea* about 2 m away, where it started alternately feeding and opening its bill wide, two or three times a second (we suspected that it was calling, but could not hear through the double-glazed window); after about ten seconds, it was joined by a female Goldcrest, both of which fed in the hydrangea for half a minute before flying off.



19. Male Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* apparently displaying to duck ornament, Surrey, March 1990 (E. W. Flaxman)

Later, I decided to test whether there was a strong reflection in the kitchen window. The window faces west, and on the morning of 18th the light had not been strong (the sun was certainly not shining). On the morning of 20th March, the conditions looked similar to those on 18th, and I went outside to test the strength of reflections in the glass; they proved to be rather weak. I took some photographs from outside, as the view might have appeared to the Goldcrest, and in doing this I realised that the white-outlined eye of a small wooden model duck on the window-sill was very obvious from outside. The duck was roughly in the centre behind the area over which the Goldcrest had moved.

I found this whole occurrence difficult to interpret or explain. The fact that the Goldcrest did not feed at all for 25 minutes (or longer, there being no way of knowing how long it had been present before I first saw it) suggests that it was seriously agitated. It was certainly not attached to the spot physically, and it did not attack the glass of the window. At no time did it move to any other part of the windowbox, which is more than 1.5 m long and contains similar half-dead geraniums throughout its length. Although it may seem odd, the least improbable explanation appears to be that the bird was mesmerised by the quaint eye of the model duck.

E. W. FLAXMAN

The Old School, Cottisford, Brackley, Northamptonshire NN13 5SH

Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that the photographs 'clearly suggest to me that the Goldcrest was reacting to the eye pattern on the duck ornament within; this in effect, if not exact detail, could be said to mimic the Goldcrest's own display markings on its crown.' EDS

Coal Tits feeding on yew fruits At about 10.30 GMT on 20th October 1989, in the churchyard at South Littleton, Worcestershire, I saw four Coal Tits *Parus ater* moving among the foliage and investigating the fruits of a yew tree *Taxus baccata*. Three of the tits were seen to pull away portions of the fleshy part of the yew fruit (or aril), and at least two of them swallowed some of the pieces they had torn off. This feeding behaviour, which looked rather clumsy, continued for two or three minutes, before the tits flew off. Snow & Snow (1988, *Birds and Berries*) did not list Coal Tits among birds which feed on yew fruits. They did, however, mention that Great Tits *P. major* eat yew seeds after discarding the pulp, the plucked fruits being held with the feet and hammered; apparently, Blue *P. caeruleus* and Marsh Tits *P. palustris* also take yew seeds occasionally. The Coal Tits which I observed certainly made no attempt to feed on yew seeds; fruit pulp alone was swallowed, and the tits did not use their feet to steady the fruits.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Coal Tit hiding yew berries Further to Dr Radford's note (above), we both remember quite clearly that some years ago, in the grounds of Malvern Priory, Worcestershire, we watched for several minutes a male Coal Tit *Parus ater* repeatedly collect single fruits of yew *Taxus baccata* which had fallen under the parent tree, then fly a short distance and hide them in the edge of the grass verge surrounding one of the tombs. No notes were made, then or afterwards, but a check of KEIS's work diary reveals that this could have been only on 23rd or 24th October 1980. We also recall examining the spot the next year, and in further years, to see if any yew seedlings had sprouted, but they had not.

K. E. L. SIMMONS and M. SIMMONS

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Extended fledging period of Bullfinch On 26th June 1988, at Woodmansterne, Surrey, I found the nest of a Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* containing four eggs near the top of a 2-m-tall privet hedge *Ligustrum*. By 06.40 GMT on 6th July, three of the eggs had hatched and the virtually naked and blind nestlings were estimated to be two days old; the fourth egg failed to hatch. The young flew while the nest was being inspected at 06.55 hours on 26th July, giving a minimum fledging period of 20, and possibly 22, days. British Trust for Ornithology nest record cards for 1939-88 (D. E. Glue *in litt.*) and other sources (e.g. Newton, 1972, *Finches*) cite 17 days as the maximum fledging period for the Bullfinch. At Woodmansterne, rain fell on all but four days during 6th-25th July 1988, total rainfall being 49 mm; the extended fledging period (at least three days beyond previous records) was probably due to this wet spell, resulting in insufficient food being collected for the young to grow and to leave the nest within the normal period.

P. J. STRANGEMAN

22 Andrew Crescent, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO7 6BE



Tanzanian scandal

A YEAR-LONG INVESTIGATION by the RSPB, the Nederlandse Vereniging tot Bescherming van Vogels (NVBV) and Tanzanian conservationists has revealed a thriving trade in protected species in Tanzania.

Forged paperwork is almost the norm, many species banned from trade are widely available from dealers, and birds which can be traded legally are caught and held captive in numbers far in excess of permitted quotas.

It seems very likely that intensive trapping has been responsible for local extinctions of one Tanzanian endemic, Fischer's Lovebird *Agapornis fischeri*. An almost complete lack of control over what is going on is amply demonstrated by the fact that a species of bishop *Euplectes* found in captivity is a form that has never been seen in the wild and is probably a species new to science.

The detailed report on the investigators' findings has been presented to the Tanzanian High Commission in London and also to the Tanzanian ambassadors in the Netherlands and Italy—countries known to import protected birds from Tanzania. Meanwhile, a report recently published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has shown that 13,300 birds were imported into the UK from Tanzania in 1991, of which 2,467 (18.6%) died either in transit or in quarantine. Despite an EC ban dating from January 1991, 620 Fischer's Lovebirds were imported into this country in the same year.

A halt could be called to this shameful traffic (and to the equally appalling situations resulting from birds coming from other countries) if the EC acted firmly and totally banned the importation of wild-caught birds into the Community, which is a major aim of the joint campaign mounted by the RSPB, the RSPCA and the Environmental Investigation Agency in 1991.

Our political masters might take a leaf out of the book of former



Request and Announcement

Blue Tits and flowering currants It has been known since 1917 that Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* feed on the nectar of the flowering currant *Ribes sanguineum*, which flowers from February to April. The tit pecks a 1-mm to 2-mm oval hole in the base of the flower tube, sometimes tearing off part of the corolla, and drinks the nectar, spending only a few seconds at each flower before moving on. Such feeding continues for only 1/2-2 minutes, so it is easily overlooked, or misinterpreted as foraging for insects.

To determine the frequency of the habit, readers who have both Blue Tits and flowering currants in their gardens are requested to check for nectar-feeding and to inspect the flowers for damage by tits. Positive *and* negative reports are needed from as many places as possible. Information on tits taking nectar from other flowers would also be of interest. Please send details to Dr Susan Fitzpatrick, Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, University of Ulster at Jordanstown, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT37 0QB, Northern Ireland.

Books in British BirdShop The following books have been added this month:

Hudson *Grouse in Space and Time: the population biology of a managed gamebird* (Game Conservancy, Lorentz. *Here I Am Where Are You?: the behaviour of the Greylag Goose* (HarperCollins)
Thomas *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds in West Glamorgan* (GOS)

Please use the form on pages ix & x for all your book orders.



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 4th-17th January 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), 13th January.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Near Horn-castle (Lincolnshire), 5th January.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 10th to at least 17th January.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* Roe Estuary, Lough Foyle (Co. Londonderry), 17th January.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Plymouth (Devon), 17th January.

Iceland Gull *L. glaucoideus* Good numbers, particularly in Ireland with up to 60 there; dead individual of North American race *kumlienii*, Scat Ness (Shetland), 15th January.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Kinnaird Head, near Fraserburgh (Grampian), 17th January.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* Dead, Jersey (Channel Islands), 8th January.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* Good numbers along east coast of England, including 27 at Titchwell (Norfolk) in mid January.

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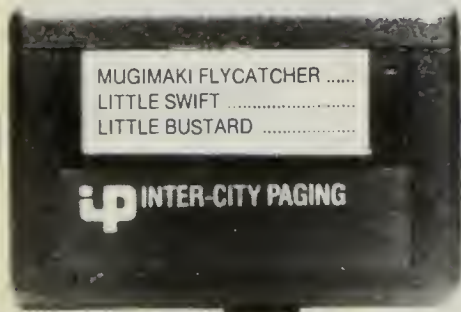
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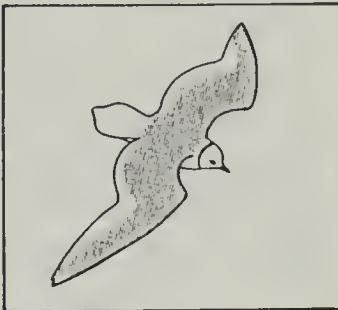
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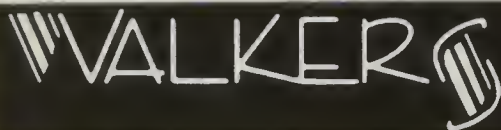
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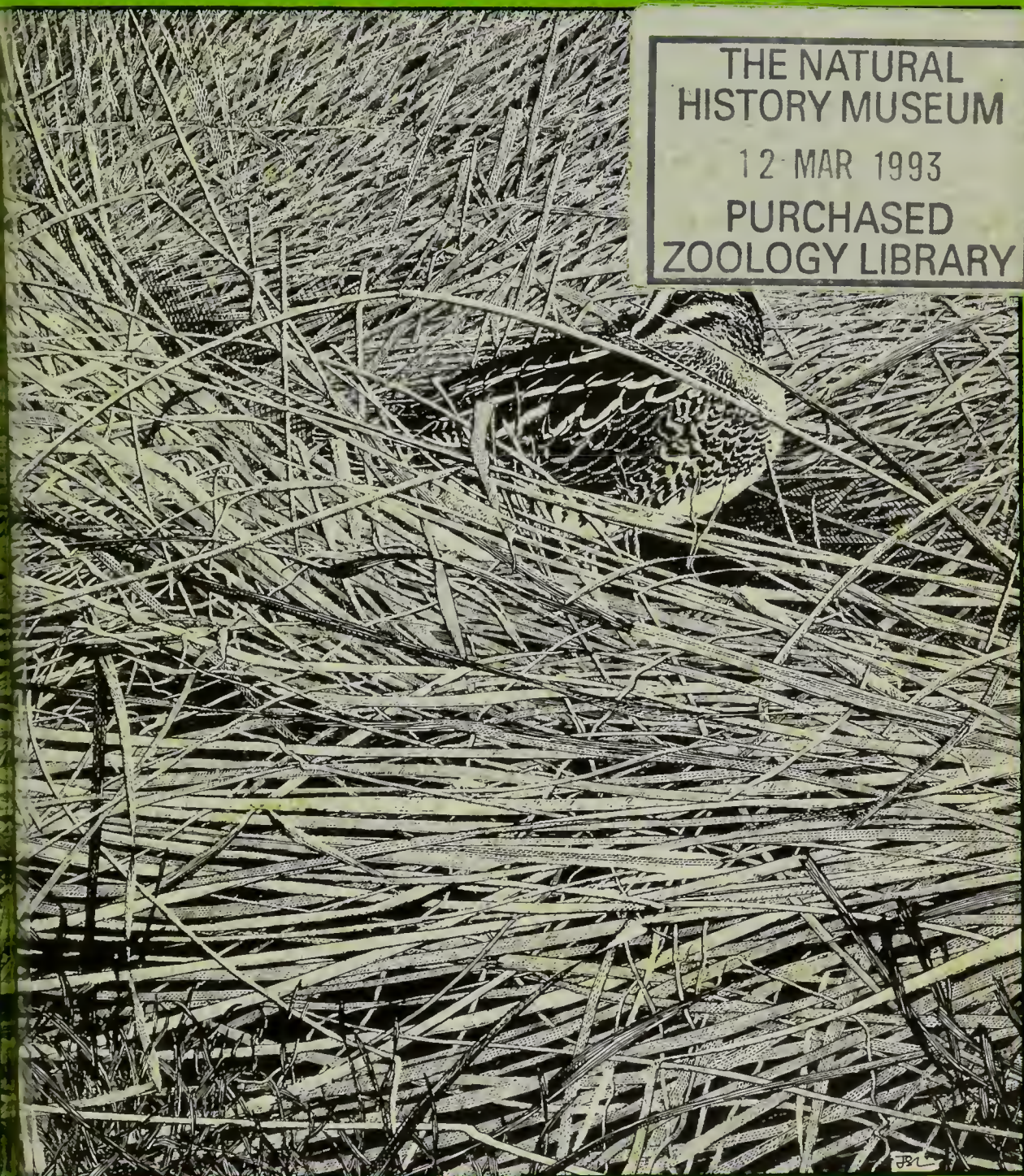
Front cover: Black Grouse lek *Dan Powell*; the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 18.6 × 20.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 28 in January issue for procedure)



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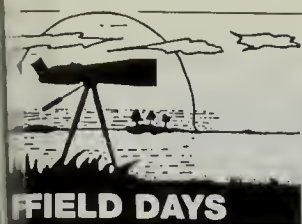
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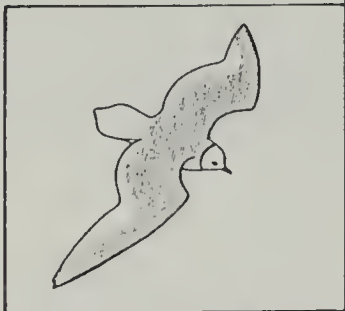
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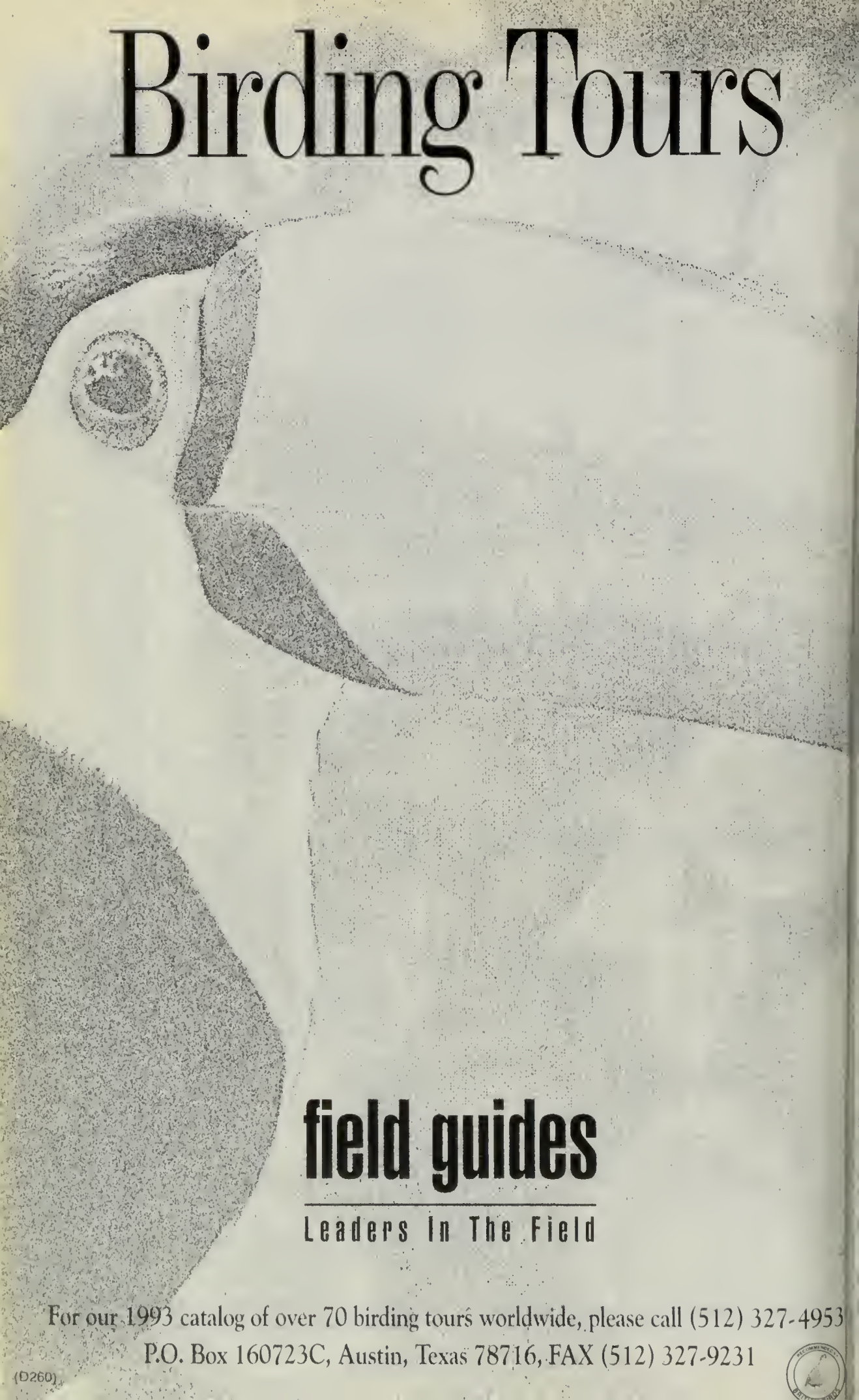
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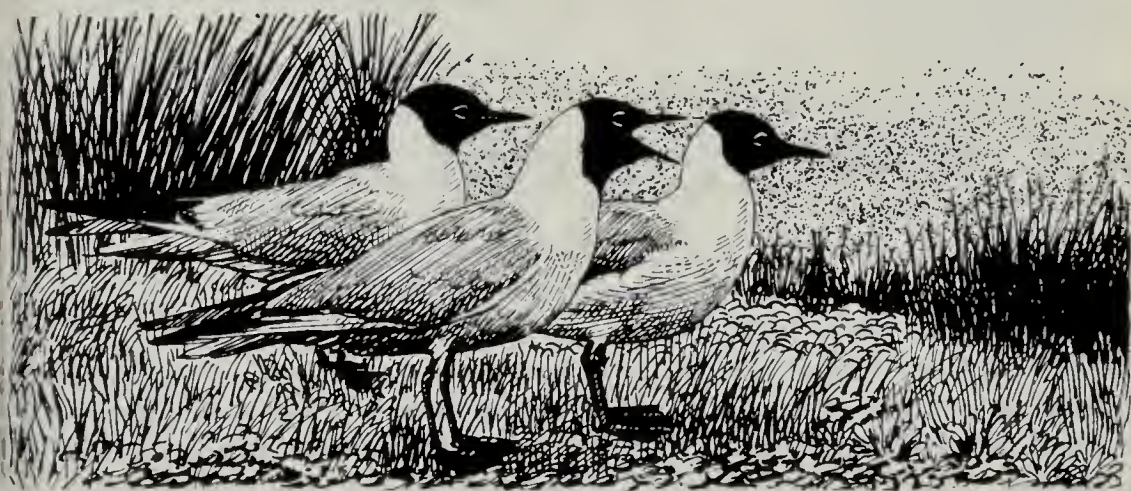


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History of Black-headed Gull colonies in Hampshire and neighbouring counties



S. J. Aspinall, J. H. Taverner and E. J. Wiseman

With the exception of a pre-1650 colony in Portsmouth Harbour, Hampshire, Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* first bred in the area of Hampshire and adjacent coastal counties at Rempstone Heath, Poole Harbour, Dorset, in 1884, in Newtown Harbour, Isle of Wight, in 1884 (possibly earlier) and at East Parley Common, Hurn, Dorset, in 1891. Today, only the Newtown Harbour colony still survives, while wet-heathland sites no longer hold any breeding pairs.

Development of saltmarsh colonies on the Hampshire mainland had started by 1909 at Beaulieu estuary and between 1905 and 1913 at Keyhaven; these had increased to three or four sites by 1938, when the first national gull survey was undertaken. From the late 1950s to the late 1960s, three Hampshire

gulleries developed, with that in Poole Harbour largely disappearing. The subsequent disappearance of a colony in Southampton Water, Hampshire, and the halving of the Needs Ore gully from the early 1970s onwards, prompted a review of all the Black-headed Gull colonies from West Sussex to East Dorset (see fig. 1). This area holds over 90% of the breeding Black-headed Gulls along the English Channel coast, these also representing around 15% of the British breeding population and over 1% of the world population.

In 1904, Kelsall published a request for dates and locations of Black-headed Gulls in Hampshire (with the comment 'I need not say that we shall not publish any information likely to injure a rare species'). The species was then even rare inland, and the annual bird reports for Hampshire saw fit to publish an inland sighting as recently as 1939.

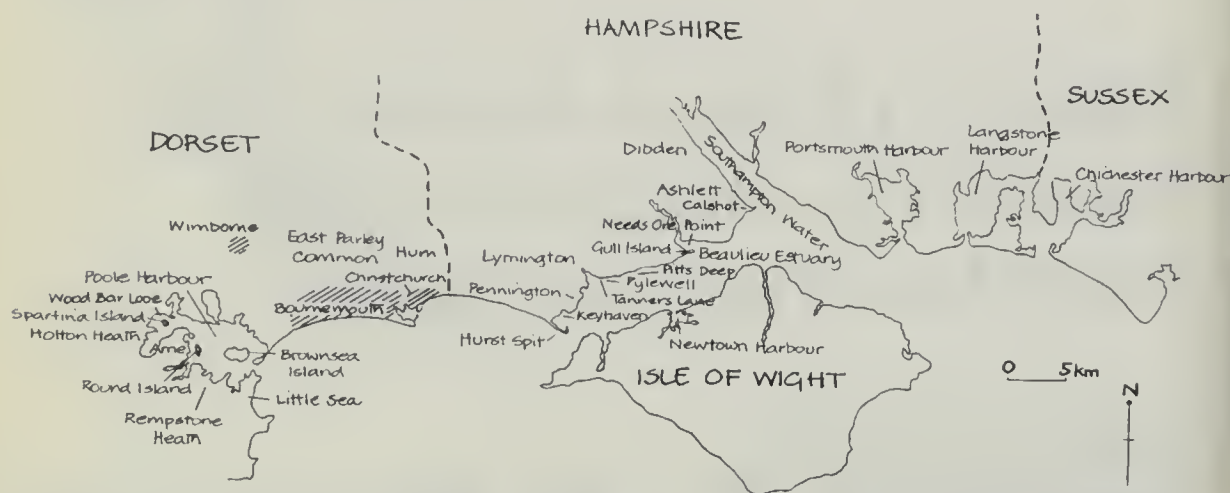


Fig. 1. The Solent and adjoining areas, showing sites of main colonies of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, past and present (see text)

Methods

Recent and historical literature was searched for references to breeding Black-headed Gulls in Hampshire, Sussex, Dorset and the Isle of Wight; this included county avifaunas and annual bird reports, as well as unpublished Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust records. Various past and present wardens, licensed and former egg-collectors of the gulleries and local ornithologists were asked to scour their records or to recall any information on breeding numbers and/or dates of colony formation or disappearance. The original 'Operation Seafarer' record cards from the Seabird Group Survey of Britain and Ireland (1969-70) were examined, and the Seabird Colony Register (SCR) — database of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Seabirds Team — was checked for post-1985 records and for any additional records.

Where a colony size was estimated and given as a range, the midpoint has been used in subsequent analyses. Fig. 2 shows counts from four major colonies for which data are most complete. The grand totals are given only for those years when all extant colonies were counted.

History of each colony

The known gulleries are here examined in chronological order of their establishment.

Portsmouth Harbour, Hampshire

The presence of a colony here was mentioned during the reign of Charles I (1626-49). It was situated on Pewit Island ('Pewit' being a local name for Black-headed Gull), and sale of gulls brought the owner the not inconsiderable sum of £40 annually (Kelsall & Munn 1905). There are no further breeding records, and we can safely assume that none has bred for 100 years or more.

Poole Harbour, Dorset

Rempstone Heath, on the south shore of Poole Harbour, is still undeveloped, although it has been afforested since 1894 and 1900, when 1,000 pairs of Black-headed Gulls nested in a *Sphagnum*-filled mere and bog. A reference to the colony starting in 1877 may well relate to this site or one nearby, although the species also nested at Little Sea, Studland, around that date. The Little Sea colony was deserted by 1888 and until about 1913, numbers then rising to some 60 pairs in 1919 and falling to zero by 1938. Otherwise, by 1919 the gullery was mostly on Arne, following a major heath fire at Rempstone in 1916, and by 1921 had spread to Morden Heath, which held about 800 pairs. Numbers then dwindled at Arne, but moved to cord-grass *Spartina* sites in the western part of Poole Harbour, where there were 1,320 pairs in 1938 (Prendergast & Boys 1983). In the 1940s, 1,000-2,000 pairs were estimated in *Spartina* on Wood Bar Looe and the Holton Heath foreshore. In 1948, over 1,000 pairs bred on Brownsea Island, which had taken over from the above sites, but they had gone by the mid 1950s; in 1961-62, Brownsea held about 250 pairs and may then have declined once more, but it was reoccupied by 1970 and until at least 1973 by a similar number. The record is surprisingly incomplete thereafter until 1985, perhaps because the population changed little, although nesting was suspected in *Spartina* on Round Island and elsewhere. Prendergast & Boys (1983) would surely have documented any markedly different situation, assuming the information to have been available. During 1985-87 (the period of the SCR), a

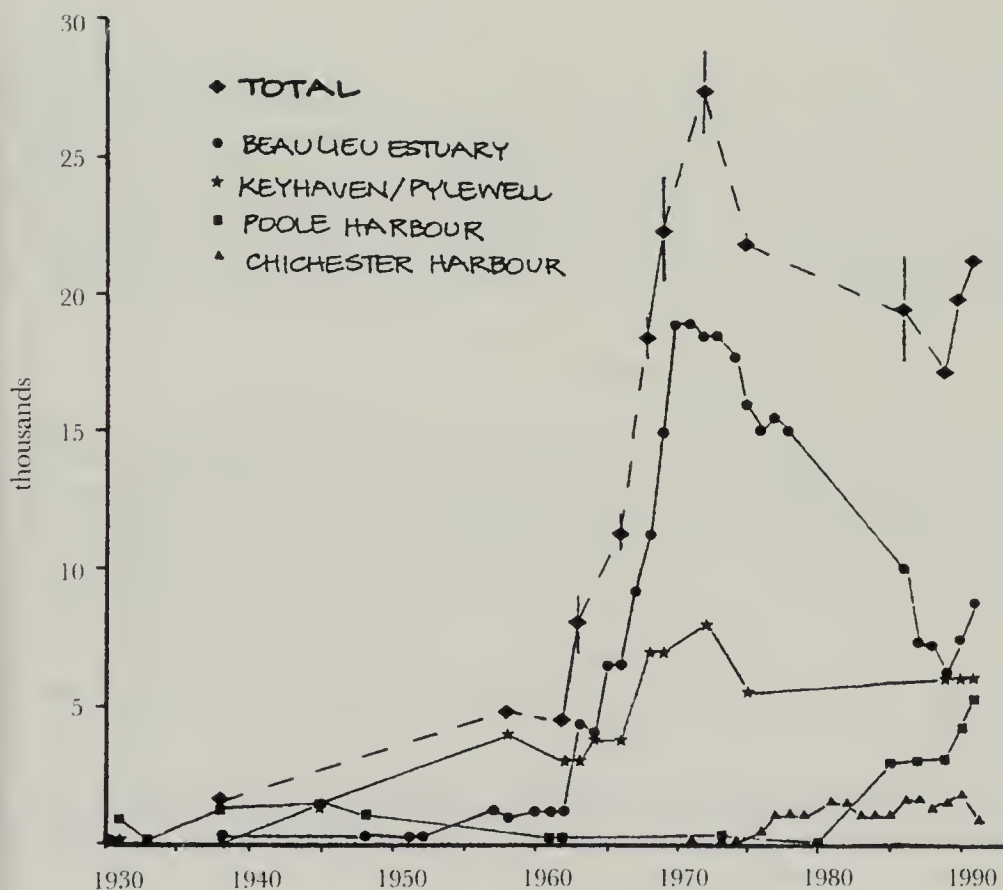


Fig. 2. Sizes of main colonies of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* in Dorset, Hampshire and West Sussex in 1930-91. Combined totals are given only for those years in which all extant colonies were counted

total of 2,000-4,000 pairs was recorded for Poole Harbour, with estimated minima of 3,000 in 1989, 4,000 in 1990 and 5,150-5,550 in 1991. Certainly, from 1980 until the present, virtually the entire population has bred on the *Spartina* islands in Wareham Channel and in the same habitat on Round Island, though the date of the original move to these two sites is not known. The *Spartina* islands formed between 1900 and 1924 to the south of Wood Bar (also *Spartina*), although sea-purslane *Halimione portulacoides* is now co-dominant. Why the gulls did not relocate here when they stopped using Wood Bar Looe, and subsequently left Brownsea, is not clear. Colonisation of other South Coast *Spartina* marshes away from Poole Harbour did not really get underway until the mid 1950s. The fall in numbers in Poole Harbour in the mid 1950s may be explained by gulls moving to the growing *Spartina* colonies in Hampshire, at Needs Ore and Keyhaven-Pylewell (see below).

Newtown Harbour, Isle of Wight

This gullery has been in existence since at least 1884, but perhaps not continuously. In the early part of the twentieth century it held 'large numbers', but in 1911 and 1912 there were only three pairs; it was still active in 1913, and increased to about 15 pairs in 1915 and to 28 pairs in 1928. In 1938, the first national survey found 40-50 pairs. The colony remained small until around 1948, and may then have been abandoned. The 52 pairs in 1958 were stated by Cohen (1963), incorrectly, to have been the first for 20 years, though there are no actual counts for the intervening years. A marked increase to about 300 pairs in 1959 was followed by estimates of 500 and 450 pairs in 1965 and 1966, respectively. Up to 1980, 250-400 pairs bred, increasing to 500 in 1987 and to 800 in 1988, the highest-ever level. In 1990 and 1991, the population had dropped to just over 300 pairs. The colony formed in a non-*Spartina* estuarine marsh, and was in 'dry meadowland' at the mouth of the harbour in the 1920s. Latterly, the gulls used a *Spartina-Halimione* island in midstream of a channel (Cheverton 1989), and within an artificially banked area of salting.

Hurn area, Dorset

'A bog near Hurn Station' (Dudmoor) provided, in 1891, the first mainland report from Hampshire (though the site is now in Dorset). East Parley Common, part of this same bog, held 500 pairs in 1906-07, but the colony was destroyed in the following year (by eggers?); it recovered to 80-100 pairs by 1910, but, although still active in 1938 and with 60-70 pairs in May 1942, there have certainly been no gulls from 1949 (possibly earlier) to the present. The Week Common gullery, 3 km away, was also active in 1910 (just possibly before that) and held about 15 pairs in 1942, probably from Parley. Uddens Heath, near Wimborne, also held 20 pairs in the 1930s, but the area was burnt in 1938.

Keyhaven to Pylewell/Pitts Deep, Hampshire

This colony appears to have formed at much the same time as the neighbouring one at Needs Ore (see below), and by 1913 was noted as being active, though numbering only a handful of pairs. The colony has been present continuously since then, but early records are sparse. It was 'still active' in 1928, held 50 or more pairs in 1938, and had become a 'large colony' by 1951. The initial increase in the 1950s coincided with the decrease in Poole Harbour. The colony extends from Hurst Spit in the west to Pitts Deep in the east, and comprises several sub-colonies, some of which have shifted position several times or have alternately increased and decreased. The whole colony held about 4,000 pairs in 1958, fluctuated between 3,500 and 5,000 pairs until 1966, and rose to 7,000 pairs in 1968 and 6,000-8,000 from 1969 to 1972. Until that time, the main part of the colony was split between the two sides of the Lymington river, but the next full survey (1975) found 5,000-6,000 pairs, of which about 80% were east of the river at Pylewell (the dominance of the eastern side having been noted three years earlier); the population west of the river, at Keyhaven-Pennington, has remained at around 1,000 pairs since that switch. Pylewell-Tanners Lane has held around 5,000 pairs for the three seasons 1989-91, and total numbers for the entire colony have possibly changed little since the mid 1970s.

Needs Ore and the Beaulieu estuary, Hampshire

This colony was founded in 1909 and had 16 pairs in 1910 (Gribble 1976). The national survey of 1938 found 75 pairs. There were no more counts for a further ten years, when a relatively

modest rise to 200 or more pairs in 1948 and to 274 pairs in 1952 gave no indication of the massive increase that was to come in the next 20 years. Totals of 1,130 pairs were counted in 1957 and 961 pairs in the national census of 1958. The colony remained at around 1,200 pairs until 1962, but increased abruptly to 4,700-5,000 pairs in 1963 (the first year for some time that eggs were not collected). The story from then on is well documented (all numbers refer to pairs): 1964, 4,000; 1965, 6,516-7,146; 1966, 6,206-6,706; 1967, 8,672-9,676; 1968, 10,500-12,000; 1969, 14,000-16,000; 1970-72, 17,000-21,000; 1973, 17,000-20,000; 1974, 16,500-19,000; 1975, 16,000; 1976, 15,000; 1977, 15,000-16,000; 1978, 15,000 (Taverner, pers. obs.). There is then a break in the record until the SCR of 1985-87, when the decline which apparently started around 1974 had continued, with only 10,000 pairs estimated in 1986, followed by a further decline since: 1987, 7,250-7,500; 1988, 7,000-7,500; 1989, 6,150; 1990, 7,000-8,000; 1991, 8,762.

Most have nested on Gull Island (*Spartina*-dominated), which has held up to 12,000 pairs, but the eastern (Exbury) side of the river has supported up to 8,000 and the western shore (Warren Shore) up to 4,000, all of these in *Spartina*. The core of the colony is undoubtedly Gull Island, although severe erosion has reduced its size considerably, 50% having been lost between 1953 and 1992. These losses to erosion may have been partly responsible for the large-scale decline in breeding numbers at this colony.

Southampton Water, Hampshire

The history of this colony, located on saltmarsh on the western shore between Ashlett and Dibley Bay, is not well known. It was in existence before the Second World War and was occupied continuously until at least the 1960s, but very few counts are available: 'tens' in the early 1950s; 700 pairs in 1957; 500 pairs in 1964; 800-1,000 pairs in the mid 1960s; but only 58 pairs (at Fawley Power Station) in 1969. The gullery may have survived into the early 1970s, but by then it was reduced to a few tens at best; no precise dates are available for its final demise, but no gulls have bred for some 20 years. Egg-collecting and industrial reclamation and development may all have been contributory factors in this. The growing colony at Needs Ore may have assimilated these gulls; it is the nearest gullery and was experiencing a dramatic growth at the time when the Southampton Water colony was disappearing.

Chichester Harbour, West Sussex

The history and development of the Chichester Harbour gullery is the most completely documented of all the South Coast colonies, this being due partly to its recent establishment. Breeding was first attempted, by a single pair, in 1964, but there were no further records until 1971, when four pairs bred. The colony grew to over 400 pairs by 1976, with 1,000 in the following year, rising to 1,536 in 1981, but numbers then fluctuated from a low of 891 (1985) to 1,731 (1990), all counts here being of active nests. On the main site of South Stakes Island, it is adjudged that there is little or no room for further expansion; future growth would be most likely on North Stakes Island, where a recent increase has in fact been noted.

Langstone Harbour, Hampshire

Black-headed Gulls first bred here in 1978 (five pairs). After a two-year absence, five to ten pairs again attempted to nest, followed by 83 in 1983 and 130 in 1984. This collapsed to only two pairs in 1986, peaked at 184 pairs in 1988, with fewer every year since (only 41 pairs in 1991). This rather fitful start to colonisation in what would seem to be a very suitable setting differs from that of neighbouring Chichester Harbour.

Rye Harbour, East Sussex

Breeding was first recorded in 1986 and 1987, when 1,000 pairs nested, this figure dropping to about 400 pairs in 1988 and 1989.

Although odd pairs have made intermittent attempts to nest in west Dorset, at Abbotsbury, no Black-headed Gulls breed along the Channel coast of Devon and Cornwall. In Kent, however, the Dungeness colony may have connections with the area reviewed in this paper, so its history is summarised below.

Dungeness, Kent

The story is very chequered. There were 'thousands' in 1847, only 150 by 1896, 60 in 1903 and

300 in 1905. Around 300 pairs were in the area again in the 1930s and 1940s, but the gulls then deserted. Up to five pairs were on Dungeness Reserve during 1952-56, but none bred again until 15 pairs in 1964, followed by 80 in 1965; by 1976, there were over 1,000 pairs. There has been some gull-control at this site.

The total population for the whole of Kent increased from 360 pairs in 1938, to about 2,500 in 1958, 3,778 in 1969-70, 6,160-6,358 in 1973 and 7,253 in 1985-87.

Discussion

Despite the lack of systematic counts, sufficient information exists to put together a reasonably complete picture of the colonisation of Hampshire and neighbouring counties by Black-headed Gulls. There is a remarkable gap of nearly 250 years between the first mention of breeding in Portsmouth Harbour in the seventeenth century and those nesting around Poole Harbour in the late nineteenth century. Was there really no breeding during this period? No evidence has been traced to point one way or the other, and the true situation will probably remain unknown.

Following that 250-year gap, the next accounts of breeding on the mainland refer to wet-heathland sites, although those heaths may have been coastal, as in the case of Arne, for example. All heathland sites were abandoned by the late 1940s or earlier. Colonisation of *Spartina* saltmarshes began in the early years of the twentieth century (the Newtown colony that formed around 1884 predated the appearance of Townsend's cord-grass *S. × townsendii*), but it was not until the 1940s that gulleries really started to grow in such habitat. Poole Harbour dominated the scene until about 1950, when the Solent colonies at Keyhaven and Needs Ore took over. The late 1950s and the 1960s saw an explosive increase in breeding numbers, which reached a peak around 1972, after which they declined a little and then remained fairly stable. Needs Ore had grown to be the dominant colony, but between 1972 and the present the gullery has halved in size, while those in Poole and Chichester Harbours have increased.

This summarised history raises five basic questions:

1. Why did the species colonise this area in the late nineteenth century?
2. Why did the gulls abandon wet-heathland sites and move to *Spartina* flats?
3. Why did they leave Poole Harbour around 1950 and apparently move to The Solent?
4. Why was there a population explosion in the late 1950s and 1960s, and how did this population support itself?
5. Why did the main colony at Needs Ore decline, with gulls apparently moving to Chichester Harbour and also back to Poole?

Original influx in the late nineteenth century

If there really was a gap of 250 years between the colony in Portsmouth Harbour and commencement of breeding in Poole Harbour, this late-nineteenth-century influx must have been a result of immigration, since there was no local population to form colonies. These immigrants could have been from elsewhere in Britain or from the Continent. Documentation of that period, however, is so poor that we shall never know.

Desertion of heathland for Spartina flats

The vigorous hybrid *Spartina × townsendii* originated near Hythe in Southampton Water in 1870, and by 1900 had spread, either naturally or through deliberate

planting, to all South Coast intertidal areas. This resulted in a rapid, large-scale accretion of sediment, which was progressively elevated and partially drained over the course of the next 30 and more years to form extensive saltings that were firm underfoot in many places. These platforms remain above high water, except during the highest spring tides (particularly when such tides coincide with low atmospheric pressure and/or strong onshore winds). For the first 30 years of this century, therefore, an ideal nesting habitat was forming.

The Black-headed Gull colonists of the late nineteenth century, however, would not have had extensive, firm saltings at their disposal; they would have had little choice for breeding grounds other than the wet heathlands. These heathlands were vulnerable to fire, and their nesting gulls to predation by foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and to human pressures such as egg-harvesting, especially as the towns of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole were expanding rapidly at that time. It has been suggested that Black-headed Gull colonies became established in these heathland sites perhaps only as a result of 'vermin'-control on the large estates and commons. Foxes can cause havoc in some colonies, yet in northern England and Scotland inland breeding is still commonplace, with or without pest-control, and colonies there shift sites frequently.

It is possible that increased human pressure and heath fires made conditions on the heathland sites intolerable for an expanding gull population, and that this coincided with considerable areas of *Spartina* marshes becoming available nearby. It is only a short flight from the heathland to the coastal *Spartina*.

The shift from Poole Harbour to The Solent

Colonisation of saltmarsh sites began in the early years of the twentieth century, but on a very small scale at that time. The population in Poole Harbour was clearly dominant until about 1950: the record is fragmentary, but 1,000-2,000 pairs may possibly have been present continuously from 1900 until around 1950; the colony subsequently declined to a few hundred pairs (on Brownsea Island) and the gulls may have moved east to the northwest Solent and Needs Ore colonies, which were then increasing. At Newtown, a similar decline mirrored that at Poole. Was this due to egg-collecting pressures? At that time, the populations at Needs Ore and Keyhaven-Pennington were too small to attract many eggers. It is strange that the Newtown colony did not grow at this time, but instead declined: it faces the Solent colonies that were expanding, and was already in existence as a nucleus for growth.

The apparent move from Poole Harbour to The Solent must remain something of a mystery.

The population explosion of the late 1950s and the 1960s

The population explosion was undoubtedly due largely to immigration, as the local population, even if it were increasing at that time, could not have produced sufficient young for such a rapid expansion. Ringing returns show that some Black-headed Gulls move considerable distances, which would allow immigration.

The creation of extensive, suitable *Spartina* flats could have attracted visiting gulls from the Continent or other parts of Britain outside the breeding season which then stayed on when the breeding season arrived. Large-scale declines

have in fact been noted in some Continental colonies, such as a fall from 250,000 to 140,000 in Denmark between the 1940s and 1970: perhaps those which disappeared were able to re-establish elsewhere, and, if so, then this could be what was witnessed in southern England. Although the timing of the Danish decline is just right, it may not necessarily have been Danish gulls that were involved. An adult found dead at Needs Ore in May 1965 had been ringed as a chick on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, in June 1961, and one of the Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus* that nested at Needs Ore in 1968 had been ringed as a chick on the Baltic coast of Germany (Tavernier 1970). If Mediterranean Gulls moved from that area, why not Black-headed Gulls, too?

Most Black-headed Gulls ringed as nestlings at Needs Ore and in Poole Harbour have been recovered within a few kilometres of those colonies, but others were found in Avon, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Shropshire, Lancashire, Essex, South Wales and France. Some Black-headed Gulls (especially first-winters) do, therefore, stray far from their natal colonies, making immigration a distinct possibility – or even probability. It has also been shown that part of the wintering population in Sussex consists of substantial numbers of individuals from the Low Countries, the Baltic Republics and Fennoscandia (Newnham 1986), and the same is almost certainly likely to apply to the wintering populations in Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.

This is not to say that natural growth did not contribute to the population explosion. Some breeding seasons at Needs Ore were considerably successful in terms of young reaching the flying stage, and it is possible that the growth of such a 'super-colony' increased chances of survival by deterring predation by the larger gulls that so often frequent Black-headed Gull colonies.

The British population of Black-headed Gulls increased from 35,000-40,000 pairs in 1928, to 47,000-53,000 in 1958, 100,000-110,000 in 1973 and 167,000 in 1985-87 (Reid-Henry & Harrison 1988; Lloyd *et al.* 1991). Reid-Henry & Harrison (1988) suggested climatic warming as a possible agent, but various other factors can be invoked to explain the increase and range expansion:

- (a) *Legal protection* from persecution (shooting) may be important.
- (b) *Wardening* of nature reserves is probably a major factor. The Needs Ore gullery had been stable for at least six years before wardening started in 1962, and it was from that point onwards that numbers rocketed so dramatically, from 1,200 pairs to 17,000-21,000 in just eight years. Prior to wardening, the colony had been subjected to constant harassment from yachtsmen and illegal egg-collectors. Wardening also started around the same time at Keyhaven-Pennington, and Chichester Harbour has such protection.
- (c) *Changes in feeding ecology* may have resulted in increased survival rates and are perhaps responsible for the range expansion in Europe. As stated previously, inland feeding was considered a noteworthy occurrence in southern England until 1940, although coastal numbers then were also low. Today, it would be remarkable not to see large numbers inland in coastal counties, even in summer (and including breeders): the gulls regularly feed behind the plough, they frequent downland, golfcourses and playing-fields, sewage-farms and a host of other sites, while feeding on aerial insect swarms over New Forest lawns is a classic foraging technique in summer. These factors, together with opportunistic scavenging at refuse-tips and sewage outfalls, could have contributed to a lower mortality and thus helped the population to increase. Sand and gravel extraction has also created suitable feeding and roosting sites inland. However, did the species increase because of these changes in feeding habits, or were the changes forced upon the birds because of an increase in their numbers, or did both of these possibilities play a part?
- (d) *The state of the vegetation* may be important. At its peak growth, *Spartina × townsendii* is a tall plant

that obscures the view of gulls nesting in its midst. Gulls seem to avoid the tallest areas, and perhaps some die-back is necessary for optimum conditions (such a die-back had started when the massive colonisation of *Spartina* flats took place).

At this point, it is helpful to summarise the population explosion (fig. 2). Around 1950, the only counts of consequence were of over 1,000 pairs in Poole Harbour and reports of a 'large colony' around Keyhaven. It is difficult to produce a total for the late 1950s/early 1960s as not all gulleries were counted in the same years, but in 1957-59 there were approximately 6,000 pairs, with a few more in 1961-62; Keyhaven-Pennington dominated that period, with around 4,000 pairs. Six years later, in 1968, the population had at least trebled, with 17,500-19,500 at Keyhaven-Pennington and Needs Ore alone (Needs Ore had by now become dominant, with 10,500-12,000 pairs). These two colonies had increased to a peak total of 25,000-28,000 pairs in 1972, the population having at least quadrupled in ten years; the other colonies in the area probably totalled fewer than 1,000 pairs at that time, thus demonstrating the importance of the Solent mainland between Calshot and Hurst Spit (which then held about 25% of the British breeding population). Numbers have declined from that peak to a total for Hampshire, Dorset, West Sussex and the Isle of Wight of 21,000-22,000 pairs. The Needs Ore colony has fallen to 8,762 pairs (1991), but Poole Harbour has come back into the picture with over 5,000 pairs (1991), while Chichester Harbour had grown to 1,731 pairs by 1990. The area as a whole has therefore lost up to 6,500 pairs since 1972; either these moved to other areas, or the population experienced a natural decrease (see below).

The Kent population seems to have increased contemporaneously with the above. From 2,500 pairs in 1958, numbers almost trebled to reach 7,253 in 1985-87. The only difference is that growth continued after 1972.

To put all of this into a national context, the total British population approximately doubled between 1958 and 1973, but this doubling included a four-fold increase on The Solent. On the other hand, the national population continued to increase when the population around Hampshire was undergoing a slight decline.

The lack of truly comprehensive counts does not allow any finer analysis. Furthermore, the degree of accuracy of the figures from different colonies must be considered. Are counts from different colonies, or from the same colonies in different years, strictly comparable? At Needs Ore, counts in the early years were of 'nests with eggs', obtained by the same team working through the gully; when the colony grew too large, totals were calculated from sample counts (again by the same observers) taken over the whole area, finding the average increase and applying that figure to the colony as a whole, this method being backed up by constant observations to assess nest density in different parts. At other colonies, apart from Chichester Harbour, most counts are estimates of breeding pairs rather than 'active-nest' counts. Needs Ore was counted at the same stage of the breeding cycle from 1962 until 1978 (when the regular team stopped working there), but were all colonies counted at the same stage each year? There was no liaison between counters, and it is probable that counts were made at different stages in different colonies, all of which would affect the accuracy of a total-population estimate.

During the course of a breeding season, several thousand pairs may relocate within a colony following flooding by spring tides (as witnessed on a number of occasions in the Beaulieu estuary); there is also some evidence of inter-colony movements after flooding, especially between Needs Ore and Keyhaven-Pylewell. Such movements have a bearing on the analysis, since counts were not conducted in a co-ordinated manner and may have been carried out over a period of a month or more. Consequently, both under-counting and over-counting are possibilities. An error of $\pm 12.5\%$ in a total population of 20,000 pairs would give a range of 17,500-22,500 pairs, which is very close to that actually observed. If this is a reasonably achievable level of accuracy, then it seems that the total breeding population for Hampshire, Dorset, West Sussex and the Isle of Wight may have been relatively stable after dropping slightly from the 1972 peak. A simple redistribution of gulls from the Beaulieu estuary to Poole Harbour (after a net movement in the opposite direction in the 1950s) and to Chichester Harbour is almost sufficient to maintain the stability of the whole population, and this may indeed be what has actually happened (see ringing recoveries below). If this is so, why should these recent shifts have taken place?

The decline at Needs Ore, and the increase at Poole and Chichester

At Needs Ore, Gull Island at the mouth of the Beaulieu river was always the core of the colony, and the decline may well be due to its size being reduced by erosion coupled with the fact that *Spartina* die-back has led to some of the previously firm surface becoming very soft. More than 50% of the island has been lost over the past 40 years, and this was the part of the estuary that was best able to withstand spring tides.

The Chichester Harbour colony increased as that at Needs Ore decreased, although the rise in numbers at the former does not come near to equalling the losses at the latter. The incomplete record from Poole prevents accurate dating of the increase there, but, if it did coincide with the Needs Ore decline, then it could have taken most of those gulls. We have as yet no explanation for the return to Poole Harbour or the recent colonisation of Chichester Harbour, but a nestling Black-headed Gull ringed at Needs Ore was recovered as an adult in Chichester Harbour and another chick ringed at Pylewell was recovered as an adult in the Poole Harbour colony. Both of these recoveries show that the return to Poole and the growth at Chichester have been fuelled, at least in part, by gulls from Solent colonies.

Concluding remarks

The possible causes of the local population changes, extinctions and new colonisations are many and varied. Those mentioned include immigration, land reclamation and industrial development (important in Southampton Water), uncontrolled egg-harvesting, disturbance, habitat change, heath fires, predation, and erosion. *Spartina* die-back was noted at many sites before gulls began to colonise, but it certainly softened the surface when it reached an advanced stage and the absence of its root systems allowed marine erosion to be more effective.

Present-day licensed egg-collecting is not considered to be deleterious to Black-headed Gull colonies, although it may prevent further growth (Aspinall & Venner 1991). Clearly, controlled collecting and colony expansion can go hand-in-hand: eggs from the Needs Ore gullery were collected regularly throughout most of its rapid growth, collecting being stopped each year in the first week of May (when breeding terns *Sterna* arrived); after being stable at around 1,200 pairs for at least six years, however, there was no collection at the colony in 1963, for the first time for a number of years, and the gull population trebled to 3,900 pairs, this being the start of the colony's explosive increase (Taverner 1966). Furthermore, egg-collecting puts back the appearance of hatched young by at least three weeks, and this change in the breeding timetable may influence breeding success. If eggs are washed out by an early spring tide, the gulls lay again; if the timetable is put back by collecting and young chicks are washed out in late May, it is too late for the gulls to re-lay. Had there been no collecting, those young chicks would have been three weeks older and able to withstand such a flood.

Eggs are currently harvested legitimately at Needs Ore, Lymington and Keyhaven, with some illegal collecting still occurring at these and other colonies. Controlled collecting must finish before the females' egg-laying powers are exhausted.

Black-headed Gulls are considered to be mostly loyal to an individual colony, with young birds usually being recruited into their natal site or to one close by, but ringing shows that this is not an absolute rule. Consequently, monitoring of breeding pairs at individual colonies cannot be carried out in isolation. The present review shows how Hampshire colonies, with those in neighbouring counties, have developed, declined or become extinct. Why numbers increased so dramatically in the 1960s is a matter for conjecture, though immigration must have been involved, but the population seems to have peaked around 1972 and then levelled off following a small decline. Breeding numbers may be increasing slowly once more. This review also demonstrates why all future surveys and monitoring should be on a co-ordinated basis, looking at all active colonies on or around the same days, and using a standardised method where 'active nests' is the count unit. Only in this way can future trends be detected with any degree of certainty. Some measurement of breeding success is also vital.

Clearly, there is still much to learn about the breeding biology of Black-headed Gull colonies, about the process of colonisation, the dynamics and functioning of gulleries, and even about general ecology, movements and demography of populations. It is notable that not one of the colonies examined has achieved any sort of long-term stability, and the factors controlling the species' breeding requirements are clearly very complex. The authors would be grateful for any useful information on this subject.

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Summary

The earliest records of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* breeding in the four coastal counties of central-southern England (excluding those in Portsmouth Harbour, Hampshire, in the seventeenth century) are of colonies around Poole Harbour, Dorset, in 1877, at Newtown Harbour, Isle of Wight, in 1884, and on East Parley Common, Dorset, in 1891. In the second half of the twentieth century, total breeding numbers increased dramatically. All colonies are now exclusively in saltmarsh or island sites. Various forces and pressures are discussed which may have been responsible for: (a) the move from wet-heathland sites to saltmarsh; and (b) the rapid increase in breeding numbers. A history of colonisation and development is given for each colony between Poole Harbour and Chichester Harbour, West Sussex, including that at Newtown Harbour. The total breeding population appears to have reached a peak of at least 25,000 pairs in 1972 and to have levelled off at a slightly lower level in subsequent years, this despite one colony becoming extinct and another losing at least 8,000 pairs. The balance seems to have been achieved by a redistribution of breeding pairs between Needs Ore, at the mouth of the Beaulieu river, Hampshire, and colonies in West Sussex and Dorset.

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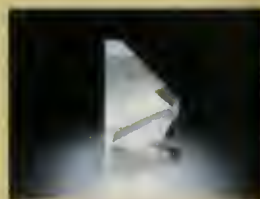


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4.

David W. Burns

On Monday 22nd June 1981, while on a week's holiday, I was taking a walk along the coastal marshes from Dunwich to Walberswick, in Suffolk. I had gone only a few hundred metres when I stopped to scan the marshes behind me. In the far distance I picked up what appeared to be a brown tern *Sterna/Chlidonias* flying directly towards me, and I kept my binoculars on it as it flew right past me, passing very close; I had excellent views of a chestnut underwing and a creamy-white rump. Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* immediately sprang to mind. When it was some distance away, I lowered my binoculars to get a better idea of where it was going to land; it appeared to drop down deep in the marshes (which were out of bounds to birders). I continued my walk, keeping an eye on where the bird had landed. I noted the time as 10.05 GMT. The bird was relocated at 10.25, standing on the ground in an open area of the marsh just off the path. I watched it for 45 minutes, taking down a description and making a few sketches; it was quite approachable. I decided to return to my car to fetch my camera.

When I returned 30 minutes later, the bird was in the same place. It appeared quite nervous this time, and I could not get very close before it flew off, landing in the far distance; I continued on towards Walberswick. On my return, I was amazed to find the bird in exactly the same spot: I stalked it and got to within about 15 m, from where I took a few photographs of it perched and then waited for it to take flight; as it lifted off, I managed to get one more photograph (when developed, this showed an upstretched wing revealing all the underwing: plate 20). The bird made several short flights, but always returned to the same spot. I crept away quietly, leaving it standing on its favoured piece of ground.

As I had not seen any other birders all day, I decided to go to Minsmere to break the news. Nobody there, however, showed much interest, so I left. In the evening, I was in the public hides at Minsmere when the assistant warden, Zul Bhatia, came in, together with John Grant and Jenny Berry. I told them of my find, and we arranged to meet at the car park at Dunwich. I found the pratincole at 19.45 hours, in the same location as before. It spent most of the time just standing hunched up, very like a miniature skua *Stercorarius*, occasionally moving its head from side to side and bobbing it up and down. Suddenly

it took wing, flew towards the sea, caught a large moth, and returned to its favourite spot to eat this. It would also snap at insects that flew past.

Description

The following description is taken from my own notes made during several periods of observation, with additional material from other observers (D. J. Britton and J. Miller) who saw the bird and sent in their notes to the British Birds Rarities Committee.

SHAPE In flight resembled a tern. When perched, could be likened to a miniature skua.

HEAD At distance, appeared to have dark eye-stripe, but closer observation showed this to be a shadow formed by the fold of its feathers. Dark line from gape continued under and past eye, then dropped down to form complete necklace around creamy-white throat patch; close views again showed necklace to be broken (almost formed by small spots).

UPPERPARTS Olive-brown (pale sandy-grey or pale greyish-fawn: DJB). Rump, uppertail-coverts and tail base creamy-white. Primaries (long) and leading edge of folded wing very dark, almost black. In flight, upperwing-coverts and mantle appeared very dark sand; contrast between coverts and outer wing not very strong (JM); dark brownish-black primary colour extended along tips of secondaries (JM). Dark outer wing, less dark inner wing, but

contrast not always evident (DJB). No hint of white trailing edge to secondaries.

UNDERPARTS Creamy buff-brown, obviously lighter than upperparts; belly and undertail-coverts creamy-white. Undertail white with black terminal band.

UNDERWING Coverts and axillaries chestnut-red. Leading edge of wing to first primary black; primaries and secondaries mousey-brown, secondaries slightly darker.

UPPERTAIL At rest, shorter than primaries (about 1-1.5 cm short of wingtips: JM). Generally fanned in flight, showing little fork, but on landing briefly showed fork of about Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* proportions (DJB).

BARE PARTS Bill short, slightly curved, with hooked tip; large gape. Very dark, almost black, with deep-red base. Legs dark brown. Eye dark brown.

On returning to my cottage in the evening, I looked up Collared Pratincole in the only book I had available at the time, *The Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe* (Bruun & Singer 1970). Certain identification points did not fit the bird I had just been watching; most obviously, the latter lacked a white trailing edge to the secondaries, and its tail was shorter than the folded primaries. Nevertheless, I telephoned home to put the news out. From the following day, 23rd June, a steady stream of birdwatchers came to see the pratincole, and I observed it daily thereafter in the same location. On Thursday 25th, I noticed when it took flight that one of its secondaries was missing from its right wing; from this I assumed that the bird was in moult, and that this accounted for the lack of a white trailing edge (worn off by abrasion) and the short tail-streamers. I could not locate the pratincole the following day, probably because of the heavy rain, and I left for home on Saturday 27th June.

On 5th July, some friends and I were at Landguard Point, Suffolk, from where we made our way to Dunwich via Minsmere. On arrival at Minsmere I met ZB, who informed us that the pratincole was now considered by some to be an Oriental Pratincole *G. maldivarum*. We were not familiar with this species, nor were other birders who were at the site.

Subsequent events

The pratincole stayed in Suffolk until 8th July. About 6th August, what is presumed to have been the same individual was found at Old Hall Marshes, Essex, where it remained until about 11th October. The following additional details, recorded in Essex, are taken from notes supplied to the BBRC by the late P. J. Grant, R. J. W. Ledgerton, and C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve.

HEAD Forehead and crown grey/warm fawn with neat buff feather fringes forming subtle scaly pattern; nape and ear-coverts uniform grey-brown/warm fawn. Very thin complete eye-ring, peach-buff above eye and whitish below, broadening to obvious pale crescent at lower rear edge of eye.

UPPERPARTS Mantle, back and scapulars uniform grey-brown/warm fawn/muddy olive-brown (PJG noted scapulars with very fine terminal whitish fringes and very faint metallic green sheen in sun).

UPPERWING Lesser, median and greater coverts very slightly darker than mantle/scapulars (with similar very fine whitish fringes and faint metallic green sheen in sun); tertials uniform, concolorous with scapulars; primaries contrast-

ingly darker, and very fresh (unworn tips). In flight, primaries and secondaries dark, coverts paler; vivid white shaft to outer primary of right wing, corresponding shaft on left wing deep red. No trace of white trailing edge throughout bird's stay.

UNDERPARTS Broad breast-band grey-buff, colour extending narrowly down flanks below closed wing; lower breast mottled buff-grey, with distinct orange suffusion; belly to undertail-coverts white.

UPPERTAIL Base white, remainder dark brown or black. Blackish-tipped outer feather reached level with 4th primary tip when perched, thus falling 1 cm or so short of wingpoint; this remained constant throughout stay.

Concluding remarks

In May 1983, I watched a Collared Pratincole in Bedfordshire (see *Brit. Birds* 77: 521), and noted several differences between this and the Suffolk pratincole. The most prominent were the Collared's white trailing edge to the secondaries, both above and below, and its greater contrast between darker primaries and paler upperwing-coverts and mantle; its tail was also longer, just about reaching the tips of the folded primaries. The 1981 individual in Suffolk was finally accepted as Oriental Pratincole, the first for Britain and Ireland and indeed for the West Palearctic, that in Essex being presumed to have been the same individual (Rogers *et al.* 1989). Remarkably, a second appeared in Britain in 1988, at Harty, Kent, from 21st or 22nd June to 3rd September; on 4th, it reappeared at another site in Kent, where it was last seen on 3rd October (Rogers *et al.* 1989). Oriental Pratincole breeds from India east to east Asia; the Indian population is mainly resident, but most east Asian breeders winter in Indonesia and northern Australia (Hayman *et al.* 1986). Before 1981, the most westerly records of vagrants were in the Seychelles and Mauritius.

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Peter Lansdown (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) and Dr Alan Knox (Chairman, British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee) have commented as follows: 'Before 1981, few observers had seriously considered Oriental Pratincole as a potential visitor to Britain, and the species' virtual absence at the time from Western identification literature necessitated much research by the BBRC into its identification characters during and between the three circulations of the Suffolk and Essex records to the Committee. Though the bird resembled a Black-winged Pratincole *G. nordmanni* rather than a Collared Pratincole in its lack of strong contrast between the upperwing-coverts and the flight feathers and its lack of a white trailing edge to the secondaries, Black-winged Pratincole was easily discounted because of the chestnut-red underwing-coverts and axillaries. With upperwing contrast being a somewhat subjective feature, the BBRC was anxious to discover whether a Collared Pratincole in extremely worn plumage could lack a white trailing edge to its secondaries. There is no such individual in the collection at the Natural History Museum at Tring, but, subsequently, Hayman *et al.* (1986) stated that Collared Pratincole may almost lose its white secondary tips through excessive wear.

'A major character of separation of Oriental Pratincole and Collared Pratincole is the latter's longer, more deeply forked tail. At rest, Oriental Pratincole's tail-tip usually falls well short of the wing-point, whilst Collared Pratincole's tail normally protrudes beyond the wing-point, though on both species tail-tip and wing-tip can more or less coincide. Not only is the outermost tail-feather of Collared Pratincole much thinner and more pointed than that of Oriental Pratincole, it is also noticeably longer, being at least 20 mm longer than the next tail-feather, whilst that of Oriental Pratincole is less than 15 mm longer than the next tail-feather. Hayman *et al.* (1986) gave the difference in length between the outermost and central rectrices for Collared and Oriental Pratincoles as 48-69 mm and 17-30 mm respectively for adults and 8-25 mm for juveniles of both species. These measurements illustrate the much more deeply forked tail of Collared Pratincole. Careful study of the tail of the Suffolk and Essex bird in the submitted descriptions and photographic evidence firmly establishes it as an Oriental Pratincole and even eliminates the frightening possibility of a Collared Pratincole \times Black-winged Pratincole hybrid; interbreeding of these two species has been recorded in France. Towards the end of its stay in Essex, the bird had gained a distinct orange tone on its lower breast and lower flanks. This is another character that distinguishes Oriental Pratincole from the other two pratincoles.

'It was a first-summer bird when it arrived in Suffolk, as evidenced by some very worn, retained juvenile inner primaries and inner secondaries, and it had moulted into adult winter plumage by the time it left Essex.

'Whilst regarding the Suffolk and Essex records favourably throughout their first two circulations to the BBRC, the Committee properly demanded that all possibilities be explored and all potential field characters be investigated, and this thoroughness resulted in the unanimous acceptance by the Committee of both records on their third circulation. The outcome of the BBRC's research into the field characters of Oriental Pratincole similarly enabled the BOURC to accept the identification on a single circulation to that Committee.

'Discussion on the bird's provenance during that circulation to the BOURC was, however, so full and detailed (and diverse!) that it was decided to recirculate the records in order that each member could have the benefit of the other members' comments before finally assessing likely origin. Several pertinent factors were discussed and taken into consideration: all Oriental Pratincoles of the northeasternmost breeding population are long-distance migrants; the bird was discovered in Suffolk just three days after the appearance on a gas-platform off Norfolk of the partly sympatric Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (*Brit. Birds* 76: 503-504; 83: 43-46; *Ibis* 126: 441; 130: 335); in early and mid June 1981, the easterly winds over western Asia were stronger than normal, though back-tracking trajectory calculations did not establish any suitable route with sufficient confidence (Norman Elkins *in litt.*); after 1977, it was not possible to import legally into Britain without an import licence any pratincole, and no such licence had been applied for up to the bird's arrival in Suffolk; the Flemish Rare Birds Committee was unable to trace any reference to imported or captive-held Oriental Pratincoles in Belgium and the Netherlands in the few years prior to June 1981 (Paul Herroelen *in litt.*); and in 1981 Oriental Pratincoles were to be found singly in captivity in Britain in London Zoo and Birdland, Bourton-on-the-Water. Though the voting was not unanimous, the BOURC's decision was that the Suffolk and Essex records were the product of

20-23. Oriental Pratincoles *Glareola maldivarum*. Top: Dunwich, Suffolk, 22nd June 1981 (*David W. Burns*); second, Dunwich, 3rd July 1981 (*Tim Loseby*); third, Dunwich, 24th June 1981 (*John T. Belsey*); bottom, Australia, March 1985 (*C. D. T. Minton*)



The inclusion of plates 20-23 in colour has been subsidised by a donation from Carl Zeiss - Germany.

natural occurrence (*Brit. Birds* 82: 521; *Ibis* 133: 218) and Oriental Pratincole was consequently placed in Category A of the British and Irish list.

'During the records' circulations to both the BBRC and the BOURC, there was a great deal of scrutiny of the submitted photographs and transparencies in an attempt to determine whether or not more than one bird was involved. Differences were found between the plumages of the bird in Suffolk and that in Essex, but, given the moult from first-summer to adult winter plumage and variables such as light, photographic range and angle, the bird's posture and so on, there was a majority opinion within both Committees that there was no unequivocal difference which established two individuals beyond reasonable doubt, so the two records are presumed to have involved the same bird. Britain's second Oriental Pratincole, the dates of which closely matched those of Britain's first, was in Kent from 21st or 22nd June to 3rd October 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 521).' EDS



ICBP news

In Focus County Birdrace Entries are now being taken for this year's In Focus County Birdrace. As usual, the event is open to teams of four, and the aim is to see as many species of bird as possible within the boundaries of a single county in 24 hours. You can choose any day in May to take part and there are prizes in ten categories.

As well as being great fun, the event also aims to raise money for conservation. This year's cause is the Polish Wetlands Project, being run by ICBP and the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP). Polish wetlands, largely unprotected, are host to a huge number and variety of birds, including important populations of the threatened Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. With development money pouring in from the West, it is a critical time for conservation in Poland.

The project has got off to a flying start, with a generous pledge of £30,000 from *Swarovski Optik*. This money will be used to buy Karsiborska Kepa, a small estuarine island on the Baltic coast, home to 1% of the world population of Aquatic Warbler. The island will be set up as OTOP's first reserve, and the project will fund the provision of all the usual facilities. As well as protecting the birds, the reserve will be an excellent focus for public awareness, being easily accessible from the city of Swinoujście.

The development of OTOP into a strong, independent and popular organisation is crucial, and the project will help by providing a campaigner to work for the protection of Poland's Important Bird Areas, many of which are wetlands.

GEORGINA GREEN

International Council for Bird Preservation, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0P7



The Hoopoe's spreadeagle posture: predator reaction or sunning?

C. H. Fry,
H. Eriksen and
J. Eriksen

Hoopoes *Upupa epops* sometimes use a remarkable posture which has been variously interpreted as an alarm, defensive or cryptic reaction to an overhead raptor and also as sunning. The posture is shown in an earlier photograph (*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 138) and also here as plates 24-26, demonstrated by an individual photographed in Oman in December 1989. We know of only one other photograph showing this posture, in Poulsen (1974), but there are drawings in Simmons (1986, from Poulsen's photograph), Glutz & Bauer (1980, elaborated from F. W. Frohawk's portrayal in Anon. 1902) and Cameron & Harrison (1978).

Evidently, only a single posture is concerned. If so, it might be used in both contexts, although it seems improbable that such a spectacular behaviour should serve two such totally different functions.

There is no question that Poulsen's (1974) Hoopoe, closely observed in captivity, was sunning. Simmons also, in *The Sunning Behaviour of Birds* (1986), is unequivocal in his identification of the spreadeagle posture as a sunning one, and he lists ten other bird families which sunbathe using it, but he adds that 'a seemingly identical posture is said also to be adopted as a defensive concealing posture against aerial predators.' Further, in Cramp (1985), Simmons did not describe it specifically in the context of sunning, but noted cautiously that a Hoopoe 'sometimes adopts elaborate concealing posture closely similar to that assumed when sunning and said to be elicited by passing bird of prey (e.g. Smith 1887, Jourdain in Kirkman 1911) and at times by man (Jourdain in Kirkman 1911) . . . disruptive pattern of plumage can make it almost invisible, especially on sandy or rocky ground. References to such behaviour go back to last century (see Münch 1952, Glutz & Bauer 1980), but modern confirmation needed.'

In a search of the literature, we have found original observations of the

spreadeagle posture interpreted as sunning in Harting (1900) and Poulsen (1974), and interpreted as a predator reaction in Naumann (1826), Günther (1900), Anon. (1902) and Münch (1952). Predator-reaction claims by Harting (1875), Smith (1887), Jourdain (in Kirkman 1911), Cameron & Harrison (1978), Glutz & Bauer (1980), Simmons (in Cramp 1985) and Fry *et al.* (1988) are all taken from one or another of the four previously mentioned sources.

Naumann (1826) reported the observation of M. Bechstein, translated in Harting (1875) as: '... when surprised by a hawk or other large bird ... it



24-26. Hoopoe *Upupa epops* in spreadeagle posture, Oman, December 1989 (Hanne Eriksen & Jens Eriksen)



resorts to a very singular expedient to protect itself. It squats upon the ground, spreads out its tail and wings to their fullest extent, bringing the primaries round so as almost to meet in front, and throws back its head and bill, which it holds up perpendicularly. So long as danger threatens, it remains in this odd position, probably to deceive the enemy . . . it looks more like an old parti-coloured rag than a living bird.' Günther (1900) observed hand-reared Hoopoes in his garden: 'their watchfulness and caution against possible enemies . . . whenever a pigeon or other large bird passed over . . . they flattened themselves on the ground . . . remaining in this attitude, in which they resembled a rag lying on the lawn, until the supposed danger was passed'. It is hard to know to what extent Günther was influenced by Naumann's writings.

J. G. Keulemans was reported (in Anon. 1902) to have been butterfly-collecting when a Hoopoe flew so close to him that he struck at it with his net. The bird immediately adopted the spreadeagle posture on the ground a few metres away, where it 'looked so much like the surroundings—gravel, bits of chalk, and small dark stones—as to partake of the nature of the ground . . . a curiously protective attitude'. Lastly, Münch's remarks in his monograph (1952) claim to rest on his original observations, but use much the same words as Naumann's and Günther's accounts and add nothing to them.

It is remarkable that none of these observers named specific birds of prey, and it seems likely that they merely inferred the presence of a hawk, rather than actually witnessing one.

The Hoopoe in plates 24-26 and *Brit. Birds* 83: plate 138 belonged to one of two pairs of Hoopoes which were foraging 20 m apart near two acacia *Acacia* trees on an otherwise almost treeless, prairie-like, 5-km² cereal farm at Sohar, north Oman, at 14.00 hours on 28th December 1989. The day was cloudless and sunny, with a shade temperature of about 27°C. After photographing the first pair, HE and JE drove up to the second pair. At this, one of the latter remained unconcernedly foraging, but the other promptly crouched and spread its wings wide, fanning the undertail-coverts, then slowly raised its rump feathers and its slightly gaping bill (plate 24) until its head



pointed up beyond the perpendicular. The Hoopoe held this posture for 1-2 minutes, relaxing the wings somewhat (plate 25), and once or twice slowly bringing the bill forward to an inclination of about 30° and then back again; it broke off by momentarily scratching its head with its foot (plate 26), then suddenly it folded its wings, stood up and resumed foraging with its mate. All of this took place within about 5 m of the vehicle.

We normally find several species of harriers *Circus*, falcons *Falco* and eagles *Aquila* and *Hieraaetus* at the farm in midwinter. On that day, however, there chanced to be none.

We interpret the behaviour not as any reaction to hawk or man, but as sunning. Almost identical postures are adopted by bee-eaters *Merops*, which characteristically start and conclude the behaviour in a similarly abrupt manner (Fry 1984: figs on page 167).

As pointed out by Poulsen (1974), sunning birds can be very vulnerable to predation. Hoopoes seem to be especially at risk, at least if they fly, when they commonly fall prey to Eleonora's Falcons *F. eleonora* and Sooty Falcons *F. color*. We speculate that a Hoopoe sunning itself on open ground will greatly improve its chances of survival, should an aerial predator suddenly appear, by keeping stock still, not taking flight nor even moving its highly patterned wings and tail to fold them. If that is correct, it helps to explain why the sunning interpretation was formerly so elusive.

In conclusion, we believe that spreadeagling by Hoopoes is sunning behaviour, and not a reaction to a predator. If there is any substance at all in the latter claim, it is that a sunning Hoopoe, on seeing a hawk, might be 'programmed' to freeze rather than flee.

Acknowledgments

We are much indebted to Dr M. L. Birch of the Alexander Library at the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, for her unstinting help with the literature, and to Dr K. E. L. Simmons for constructive comment on early drafts of this short paper.

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Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. EDS

Leica 7 x 42BA binocular



Visitors to the British Birdwatching Fair in September 1992 may recall the striking sight, at the *Leica* trade stand, of a pair of the firm's latest binoculars submerged in a tank of water. To demonstrate their robustness, one of the attendants would also sometimes throw a pair hard on to the ground. Introduced in 1990 to replace the long-serving *Leitz* 'Trinovid' range, the three models (7×, 8×, and 10×) of the new generation of roof-prism *Leica* binoculars also carry that name even though (confusingly) it no longer appears in the promotional material. They all have a common objective diameter of 42 mm, are waterproof and dustproof in a sealed, all-metal, protectively covered body (in black or green), the movements of the precision-made, perfectly aligned, and specially coated optical system being entirely internal. When separated, the two elements of the central focus wheel also serve to adjust the focus for each eye independently, should it be re-

quired, the settings remaining fixed until changed by the same procedure. Even more ingeniously, the usual fold-down rubber eye-cups are replaced by a telescopic arrangement, retracted for spectacle wearers or click-stopped open for the rest of us. The three models are alike in appearance, in dimensions (about 14 cm long, 13 cm wide), and weight (890 g). Each costs about £698 at present and is supplied with a soft leather pouch and a flexible rubber eyepiece cover, both of which are designed to be attached to the carrying strap of the binocular itself.

I tested the 7×42 model. Strange to say, the 7× is not recommended by *Leica* for birdwatching – perhaps because it has a minimum focusing distance of about 6 m (compared with 5 m for the 8× and 4½ m for the 10×). Nevertheless, with its superb light-gathering power (with the eyepiece retracted, the 6-mm exit pupils gaze up at you like the two orbs of a hush-baby), great depth of focus, and extraordinarily wide field of view (140 m at 1,000 m), I found it to be an excellent general binocular, easy and comfortable to use, without any hint of eyestrain, if rather heavy for me personally. Being now largely desk-bound and having, since my long-serving British-made binoculars finally gave up the ghost, put up with some rather inferior ones in recent years when birdwatching away from my garden (where I use a 8 × 30 *Zeiss* monocular), I was greatly impressed by the *Leica*'s marvellous clarity. The image is crisp, true, and utterly free from the 'colouring' that the lens coating of some other makes impart; only at extreme long range did I

find the low magnification something of a handicap, but one would probably then use a telescope for identification purposes anyway.

I can, therefore, thoroughly recommend this binocular for serious birding and bird study. Whether it is preferable to the two higher-power models will depend on personal needs, but I found it such a pleasure to use that I would probably have chosen it myself in preference to both the others, not least for the amazing way it lets the eye see into the darkness of otherwise impenetrable foliage. I think, however, that *Leica* will have to make all three of their binoculars more suitable for birdwatchers by providing at least the option of a hard case. I find the present arrangement, whereby one is supposed to let both the eyepiece cover and the carrying pouch dangle from the binocular's strap during use, wholly impractical. K. E. L. SIMMONS

[If any reader would like further details of this product, please send a SAE to Sandra Barnes, BB Advertising, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NL.]



Announcements

'The Famous Grouse' Scotch whisky Christmas puzzle The solution to the puzzle set on page xiii in the December 1992 issue included the following four species: ROOK, SMEW, COOT and TEAL. The two commonest of the several correct sequences were: LARK, lack, lock, look, ROOK, cook, coop, crop, CROW, grow (or crew), glow (or brew), slow (or blew), slew, SMEW, stew (or spew), stem (or sped), seem (or spud), seam (or spun), swam (or span), SWAN, swat, swot, soot, COOT, cook, cock, lock, luck, DUCK, buck, bulk, bull, GULL, full (or gill), fell (or till), tell, TEAL, team, term, TERN.

The three winners of bottles of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky, whose entries were drawn from the several hundred correct answers received by 15th January, were Mike Cotton (Enfield, Middlesex), R. K. Smith (Walsall, West Midlands) and Rachel Warren (London).

Books in British BirdShop Note this month:

SPECIAL PREPUBLICATION OFFER

SAVE £20.00 on *Sick Birds in Brazil* (Princeton)

The following books have been added this month:

Birkhead *Great Auk Islands* (Poyser)

Dalton & Smith *The Secret Life of a Garden* (Ebury)

Davies & Quinn *Dunnock Behaviour* (OUP)

French *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago* (Helm)

MacKinnon & Phillipps *A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali* (OUP)

Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* 5th edn (HarperCollins)

Slater, Slater & Slater *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds* (Weldon)

Please use the form on pages xi & xii for all your book orders.



Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. vol. VI: warblers. By S. Cramp *et al.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992. 728 pages; 31 colour plates; numerous line-drawings. ISBN 0-19-857509-2. £75.00.

When reviewing a book as large and important as volume 6 of *BHP*, it is difficult to know where to begin. The presentation of the work is up to the high standard expected from Oxford University Press and, of course, it matches the rest of the set in your bookcase.

Having stated the obvious, what is the content like? My major birding interest is identification, so I shall confine my comments to the plates, field characteristics and the 'small print', including plumage, moult and geographical variation. OUP could have printed the sonagrams upside-down and I would not have a clue.

The first thing that readers will notice is that there are very few plates. Volume 2 had 52 pages of plates for 104 species, whereas volume 6 has only 16 pages for 63 species. There are only three birds each of Ménétries's *Sylvia uustacea* and Cyprus Warblers *S. uelaoulliorax*, and four each of Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* and Rüppell's *S. rueppellii* and Spectacled Warblers *S. conspicillata*. So, there are not enough, but what is the quality like? In my opinion, it is variable. The illustrations of *Locustella*, *Acrocephalus* and *Sylvia* warblers are superb. They not only augment the text, but are also so detailed that they can be used alone by those people who find it easier to take in information visually than by the written word. Ian Lewington's birds are perhaps generally a little too rufous, while Alan Harris's could be 10-20% bigger—but this is mere carping. I think that the *Phylloscopus* warblers are a bit disappointing.

There are several inaccuracies: the fore-supercilium of the Two-barred (Greenish) Warbler *P. phoenicurus* is wrong; the median coverts are tipped pale on both first-autumn Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides*, whereas even the text says that is a rare feature; the Yellow-browed Warblers *P. naumanni* do not have the right jizz; while no structural distinction is shown between Radde's *P. schlegelii* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus*. That brings me to the *Hippolais* warblers by Ian Wallace, which will, I suspect, be controversial. To my eyes, he has made little effort to change his impressionistic style for one more suited to a book destined to be one of the most important identification works of the foreseeable future. His paintings are, as always, evocative, but they do not provide the detailed and accurate plumage guide that most readers will expect.

The most important part of *BHP*, for me, is 'Field Characteristics'. Here, Wallace uses his outstanding ability to portray birds in words. The descriptions of Booted *H. caligata*, Blyth's Reed *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (including the oft-ignored rusty-toned juvenile) and Marsh Warbler *A. palustris* could not be beaten, while even the comparatively unknown Mountain Chiffchaff *P. siudianus* gets a detailed and accurate account. I was disappointed, however, to see no mention of some of the more recent identification points; for example, the shape of the loreal part of the eye-stripe of Greenish Warbler and some of the more detailed features separating Lanceolated *Locustella lanceolata* and Grasshopper Warblers *L. uaevis*. These are, however, usually picked up in the plumage descriptions. The greatest disappointment, for me, was the exclusion of Two-barred (Greenish) Warbler from the species accounts, although I understand that the contents were planned before the first one turned up in the Western Palearctic.

The detailed 'Plumage Descriptions' are up to the usual standard and are an important reference (if somewhat difficult to decipher), while the sections on 'Moult' and 'Geographical Variation' have already exposed gaping holes in my knowledge. The text includes several out-of-place brackets and one or two minor misprints which are not major detractions, but may at first baffle readers, particularly on the plate of Thick-billed Warbler *A. aedon*.

This volume is worth buying, but I cannot help wondering whether the lack of plates has something to do with the fact that potential purchasers are already 'hooked', having paid so much for the previous volumes. Let us hope that the next two volumes can keep up the standard of written work, but have more plates of the standard of the best in volume 6. COLIN BRADSHAW

Dunnock Behaviour and Social Evolution. By N. B. Davies. Illustrated by David Quinn. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992. 272 pages; 19 black-and-white plates. ISBN 019-85467-42. Hardback £35.00, paperback £13.50.

As a result of the intense conflict of interests between males and females, the Dunnock (Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*) has developed a remarkably variable mating system involving not only monogamy, polyandry and polygyny, but also 'polygynandry' (i.e. the polygamous association of more than one female and more than one male). Edmund Selous, the first ornithologist to record the peculiar cloaca-pecking behaviour of this species, once said: 'Always distrust this is my experience in field natural history any *pat* explanation of anything.' This could well have been Nick Davies's maxim, too, for, had he not kept an open mind during his ten-year study of this deceptively innocent-looking little bird, he may not have produced so comprehensive an account of its bizarre sex life or such a convincing interpretation of its complex breeding behaviour. In this, he was aided by the technique of DNA 'fingerprinting', which, together with binoculars and colour rings, he considers now to be an essential tool for the birdwatcher.

Davies's book, which also includes a chapter on the relation between Dunnocks and the Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, should be read, he suggests, 'in the spirit of a detective story'. As such, and as a key contribution to the study of the behavioural ecology of birds, it can be enthusiastically recommended. Its value is increased by David Quinn's fine line-drawings.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

The Birds of Africa. vol. IV. Edited by Stuart Keith, Emil K. Urban & C. Hilary Fry. Colour plates by Martin Woodcock; line-drawings by Ian Willis. Academic Press, London, 1992. 609 pages, 32 colour plates, 2 black-and-white plates, 359 distribution maps. ISBN 0-12-137304-5. £85.00.

Ten years ago, I reviewed the first volume of *The Birds of Africa* with enthusiasm. Here, at long last, was the reference work that Africa, with its 2,000 species of birds, so desperately needed. It was aimed to complete this monumental work in just four volumes, but, with the publication of volume IV, we learn that another three volumes are now planned, so another decade is likely to pass before the series is completed. This volume expansion is easily explained. When *The Birds of Africa* was first conceived, it was thought that a general lack of knowledge of many (possibly even the majority) of the passerines would mean that a much greater number of species could be covered in a single volume. As the introduction to this volume explains, more is known about African passerines than the editors had supposed. Furthermore, the work has been gradually expanding in scope with each volume, and the species accounts getting longer. The average text length per species is now up to 1,000 words: as the editors explain, 'we thought it preferable to include as much information as possible while keeping the texts readable.'

This they have certainly done, making *The Birds of Africa* one of the easiest books of its type to work from, and to read. Compared with *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, in which many of the texts would have benefited from more vigorous subediting, *The Birds of Africa* is user-friendly, and not spoilt by trying to squeeze a quart into a pint pot. This spacious approach is carried through to Martin Woodcock's beautifully painted colour plates, which are reproduced at a size which frequently equates with life, and lets you see what the bird really looks like.

Volume IV considers some of Africa's better-known passerines, such as the swallows and martins, along with some of the most secretive and skulking forest-dwellers, such as the greenbul and the forest robins – the alethes and the akalats. The lengths of the texts give an accurate indication of how much, or how little, is known about certain species, and anyone planning an ornithological expedition to Africa would have no difficulty working out which species require more field-work. Why, for example, are Prigogine's Greenbul *Chlorocichla prigoginei* and Graner's Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina graueri* so restricted in their ranges? Hopefully, this splendid volume will inspire more fieldworkers to visit Africa, and help fill in the surprisingly few gaps in our knowledge.

DAVID TOMLINSON

Identification Guide to European Passerines. 4th edn. By Lars Svensson. Svensson, Stockholm, 1992. 368 pages; over 500 line-drawings. ISBN 916-301118-2. Paperback £25.00.

The first edition of this seminal book was published as long ago as 1970. Its author-publisher, Lars Svensson, is one of the world's great ornithologists. That a fourth edition of any book should be considered worthy of a full review is remarkable, but in this case totally justified. Originally intended mainly for ringers, breaking new ground in emphasising ageing criteria for Europe's common passerines, this book has grown and developed until it is now an essential work of reference for every birdwatcher, whether ringer, student of behaviour, census worker, migration-watcher or twitcher. Everyone with more than a passing interest in birds should have this new edition of this title on his or her bookshelves. Its pages are crammed with vital information on moult and ageing, racial separation and (more than in some of the earlier editions) specific identification. The over 500 drawings are mostly diagrams of structure or feather detail, useful these days not only for in-the-hand examinations, but also in the field, now that feather-by-feather examination is often possible with modern telescopes and the modern birders' expertise. Many potential purchasers will already own one of the three earlier editions; even so, everyone ought to have this new one. It is based on a tried-and-tested formula, and its facts have stood the test of time or, where they have not, the information is now updated or expanded. Chris Mead, the BTO's Senior Ringing Officer, rightly refers to this as 'the ringer's Bible'. J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Secret Life of a Garden. By Stephen Dalton with Bernardine Shirley Smith. (Ebury Press, London, 1992. 160 pages. £18.99) Anyone who has seen Stephen Dalton's earlier *The Secret Life of an Oakwood* or *At the Water's Edge* will need only to be told that this is another book featuring his photographs. It is impossible to praise too highly the quality of the photographs or their reproduction in this superb book. The photographs, of birds, insects, mammals and plants, are amazing, and many are stunningly beautiful. JTRS

La Passion des Oiseaux: guide pratique de l'ornithologue et du birdwatcheur. By Philippe J. Dubois & Marc Duquet. (Sang de la Terre, Paris, 1992. 241 pages. Paperback F150.00) Sound practical advice and up-to-date information on modern birdwatching, written with plenty of humour—but your French must be good. Includes an excellent chapter on the 'hotspots' of the West Palearctic, another on 'special birds', and a most useful colour chart. Four well-chosen mystery photographs in colour are designed to show how birdwatching has progressed (the influence and innovative ideas of *British Birds* being acknowledged throughout). Numerous apposite colour photos (some wonderful habitat shots) and paintings, line-drawings and monochromes, and a superb set of cartoons (my favourite: the birdwatching visitor to Scandinavia flat on his back, stunned at the sight of five species of owl shoulder-to-shoulder on a single branch). Every spread is illustrated in this witty and most worthy book. If you can read French, buy it (and help to support conservation in France). DAC

A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago. 2nd edn. By Richard French. (Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1992. 426 pages. Paperback £25.00) Completely updated, new edition of this very thorough standard field guide. JTRS

Birdwatching by Train: where to go in Britain. By Alison M. O. Harris & Nigel G. Harris. (Transport Publishing, Glossop, 1992. 120 pages. Paperback £5.95) How to get by train to 50 birdwatching sites which are at or close to railway stations, with a dozen or so examples of species to be seen at each. JTRS





Notes

Presumed Red-crested Pochard × Northern Pintail hybrid On 30th August and 6th October 1990, and during August 1991, at Rutland Water, Leicestershire, I observed what I presumed to be a male Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* × Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* hybrid. The bird superficially resembled a female Red-crested Pochard and in brief or distant views at rest could easily have been mistaken for one. The main differences shown by the hybrid compared with female Red-crested Pochard were: bill similar, but with a suggestion of Northern Pintail's darker culmen ridge; head pattern less distinct, and forehead a little less steep; mantle perhaps a shade darker brown; dark brown crescents present on flanks; instead of a broad white wingbar, showed a greenish-brown speculum with white along fore and rear edges, though this pattern normally not visible at rest; tail quite long and pointed; invariably fed by up-ending with legs splayed out, and did not dive; associated with Mallards *A. platyrhynchos* and Gadwalls *A. strepera*, not with Red-crested Pochards present at the same time. The bird's identity was deduced from a combination of characters, especially the bill, speculum and tail. It was confirmed by E. H. Gillham, who informed me (*in litt.*) that this individual bore a striking similarity to one (a male aged five months) of two Red-crested Pochard × Northern Pintail skins he examined at the Harrison Zoological Museum, Sevenoaks, Kent; the second skin was of a female which also superficially resembled female Red-crested Pochard. The sex of the Rutland Water hybrid was determined by observations on 6th October 1990, when it was seen to be developing black undertail-coverts (a male character).



J.W. 91

I thank John Wright for the accompanying illustration, which admirably conveys the general appearance of the hybrid (left) in comparison with female Red-crested Pochard.

A. H. J. HARROP

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Cross-generic hybrids are much less common than intrageneric ones, although they do occur. K. E. Vinicombe has commented as follows: 'I have seen three presumed Red-crested Pochard × Mallard hybrids over the years. Like the Rutland Water individual, these superficially resembled female Red-crested Pochard, but one (which I saw well) had a dark crown, pale face, similar head shape and relatively plain body plumage, though the bill, while similar in shape to Red-

crested Pochard's, was intermediate in colour between the latter and female Mallard's, with an orangey band behind the tip extending back to the base along the bill sides; the upperparts feathers were edged paler and the flanks were slightly barred; the tail was whitish and, like Mr Harrop's bird, longer than Red-crested Pochard's. Of the other two (seen less well), one differed from female Red-crested Pochard in having a rather long neck, more sloping forehead, longer and all-dark bill, paler flanks, and longer tail; the other was similarly longer-tailed and "rangier" than accompanying Red-crested Pochards. Any unusual duck needs to be examined closely for evidence of hybridity: any divergences from the normal, no matter how small, may well suggest that the bird is a hybrid. Also, when identifying hybrids, it must be remembered that a lot of them are probably escapes, so it is critical not to take too narrow a view of the bird's parentage.' EDS

Dotterels evading Peregrine Falcon by settling near human being

D. G. P. Chatfield's note (*Brit. Birds* 85: 670) and others in earlier volumes show that various birds occasionally fly towards people when pursued by predators. On 20th August 1978, I was in the Cairngorms when 13 adult and two juvenile Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* flew quickly downhill to disappear behind a ridge. I had walked 50 m towards the ridge when they reappeared in flight, closely pursued by a female Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. They flew straight towards me, alighted only 15 m away, and at once crouched motionless and so low that they were almost out of sight but for their heads. Meanwhile, the Peregrine had flown to about 100 m range before turning away and disappearing, not to return within the next hour at least. A minute later the Dotterels rose, and started feeding when I walked away.

ADAM WATSON

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Marsh Owls roosting in trees Although both Cramp (1985) and Fry *et al.* (1988) stated that the Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* roosts on the ground, often in depressions in grass, the former adding that it is among the least arboreal of owls, in winter 1987/88 van den Berg (1989) recorded up to 20 individuals of this species roosting in trees in a small area of parkland at Moulay Bouselham, Merja Zerga, Morocco. On 7th January 1989, I saw seven Marsh Owls leaving this same roost in Morocco; the following morning, one was located roosting about 5 m up in a tamarisk *Tamarix*, and eight left the roost that evening. Tree-roosting appears, therefore, to be a regular habit of this species.

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 VAN DEN BERG, A. B. 1989. Bird records in Morocco in December 1987 and January 1988. *Dutch Birding* 11: 31-34.

Female plumage of Desert Sparrow The largely sedentary Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex* occurs in two widely separated regions, in the Sahara and in 'Russian Turkestan'. The African population, sometimes treated as two separate but similar races, *simplex* and *saharae*, is comparatively well known

(Summers-Smith 1988), but the Asian form *zarudnyi* is almost unknown, at least to Western ornithologists. During recent visits to Morocco and Central Asia, I was able to observe individuals of both populations. In 1988 (accompanied by M. Densley and others) and again in 1989, I visited the small breeding colony of Desert Sparrows near Merzouga, Morocco. This colony was described by Densley (1990), together with a useful series of photographs; the latter included a typical female of the North African form (*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 119), which agreed with various field-guide illustrations depicting a nondescript, sandy sparrow virtually lacking any distinctive features (although an indistinct but complex wing pattern can be seen at close range). I was, therefore, surprised to discover, when I visited the Karakum desert in Turkmenistan, in 1990, that the female plumage of Desert Sparrow of the race *zarudnyi* was completely different. We found a single pair of this localised subspecies building a nest, and it was only when the two were seen together that it became apparent that the female was merely a duller version of the male: the black mask and throat were only slightly less distinct than on the male and appeared to be brownish-black rather than jet-black, while the wing pattern was almost as striking as the male's.

Subsequent search of the literature revealed a notable discrepancy regarding the female plumage of the Central Asian race. Heinzel *et al.* (1972) made no mention of this race, but, although it is included in their range map, it is really outside the scope of their book. Hollom *et al.* (1988) did cover *zarudnyi* (an isolated population of which formerly occurred in eastern Iran, but, with no records this century, is presumed to be extinct there), briefly mentioning that this race is greyer, but gave no information about the female. Hûe & Etchécopar (1970) similarly described, in brief, differences between the Asian and African forms (quoted word for word from Vaurie 1959), but again only for males; worse still, the female illustrated on their plate 30, and labelled *zarudnyi*, clearly shows the sandy, nondescript plumage of the nominate African race. Summers-Smith (1988) covered the entire *Passer* genus in a comprehensive manner, but also gave only a very brief descriptive comparison between the African and Asian forms. It is perhaps relevant that there are no specimens of *zarudnyi* at the Natural History Museum, Tring.

Not surprisingly, Russian ornithologists are familiar with the eastern race of Desert Sparrow. Flint *et al.* (1984) described the female and juvenile as similar to the male, with black replaced by brownish. Dementiev & Gladkov (1970) also stated that the female resembles the male, but with lores, circumorbital ring, post-orbital band and gular patch smaller and brownish-black (not black); other minor differences are also given. Summers-Smith (1988) quoted Dementiev & Gladkov's work, yet omitted to mention the female plumage of *zarudnyi*.

It is interesting that the African form of Desert Sparrow should show strong sexual dimorphism, while the sexes of the Asian form are almost alike. Hall & Moreau (1970) suggested that the two populations may have evolved independently (from House Sparrow *P. domesticus*), but Summers-Smith (1988) considered that this would have resulted in different species, convergent through their adoption of the same habitat. The strong difference in sexual dimorphism between the two allopatric populations (not recognised by Summers-Smith) is hardly sufficient grounds on its own for 'splitting' the species, and

indeed there are many similarities in other respects. Further comparative studies may, however, reveal other differences. Although the female plumage of the Central Asian Desert Sparrows has been correctly described in some of the literature, I hope that it will now be more widely recognised in future publications.

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Hawfinches feeding like crossbills on Scots pine During 1985-90, while stationed in Germany, I endeavoured to find out exactly what Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* fed on in the winter months in areas without hornbeams *Carpinus betulus*. In Germany, most Hawfinches visit garden birdtables in winter, where they take mainly sunflower seeds, but also peanuts, hemp and sometimes wheat; parties of 30 are not uncommon in several gardens in a single street, and, since Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* are absent, this species quickly becomes dominant at any feeding station. In the local Stadt park of Harsewinkel, the Hawfinches fed on ash keys *Fraxinus excelsior* and the nuts of a few hornbeams in a private garden.

It was not until 23rd January 1987 that I got my answer: as I walked through the Boomerbe woods on the western outskirts of the town, I came across a large party of Coal Tits *Parus ater* feeding busily in the tall grass on seeds of Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*; above, in the canopy, over 100 Hawfinches were ripping open the scales of cones and dislodging the seeds, which fell to the ground. The finches' feeding method was to climb down on to a cone and, beginning at the tip, to tear off each scale, working up the cone; the tearing was that of a violent ripping action, with most pressure being exerted at the point where the scale joined the cone. After five to ten minutes, they would then land on the ground and begin to eat the seeds. One Hawfinch was seen to snap off a whole cone, only to fall briefly downwards with the cone before releasing it and flying on to a branch. Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra*, which prise out the seed with their specially adapted bills, have no need for such violent action; the Hawfinches had to be so aggressive in order to dislodge the seed from behind the scale. This feeding activity and method were noted throughout February and March, the coldest months of the winter, in different parts of Germany.

L. BATT

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Letters

Song Thrushes and Redwings feeding on periwinkles I was surprised to see the note on Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* feeding on common periwinkles *Littorina littorina* in Kent (*Brit. Birds* 85: 618). Song Thrushes always fed on the old periwinkle-bed at Liverpool's 'Cast Iron' (Dingle) shore before Otterspool Promenade was built there. In my 1941 book *Birds of the Liverpool Area*, under 'British Song Thrush', I wrote: 'In hard frost of early 1940 many were feeding on winkles on Dingle shore and in the following winter I noticed Thrushes from nearby allotments (gardens) carrying winkles back from the shore to break against stones.'

I used to show my pre-war WEA students and local naturalists' societies how to locate Song Thrushes and Redwings *T. iliacus* feeding on winkles on Dingle shore by the noise they made breaking them against pebbles. I have also seen Redwings doing this in hard weather on Hilbre Island. Shelled snails are rarely found on Liverpool's acid city soil; where snails are commoner, in nearby Wirral, the habit is seldom seen on Wirral shores. ERIC HARDY

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Flycatcher identification Nick Riddiford (*Brit. Birds* 84: 19-23) stated that the shape of the primary-base patch may help in separating Collared *Ficedula albicollis* from Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* in female and non-breeding plumages. The difference in this character between the two species was described and illustrated by Lars Jonsson in a Swedish regional bird magazine (*Bläcken* 7: 21-24) in 1981 and has therefore been well known in Sweden for at least ten years; the paper had a short English summary, but the magazine is probably not read by many non-Swedes. This highlights a major problem: much important information is presented locally and is therefore not available to the wider audience. One can only hope that a growing international contact network will lend wings to our knowledge of birds.

LARS G. R. NILSSON

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Lars Nilsson has drawn attention to what is, indeed, a problem. To minimise the risk of similar 'repetition' of published material in the future, we should be most appreciative if the authors of identification notes and papers in regional journals would, in the spirit of Mr Nilsson's final sentence, send a copy or reprint of their work to *British Birds*, to be held on file for reference. EDS



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Arctic Redpolls in Kent The following description was submitted to the Kent Ornithological Society on 24th March 1991, and passed to the Rarities Committee on 20th July 1991. The record was accepted, and published in October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 549).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* – Church Wood, Canterbury. 24th February, 3rd and 9th March 1991.

CONDITIONS Bright and sunny on 24/2 & 3/3; overcast on 9/3. The initial view and most subsequent ones were obtained with the light from behind the observers.

TIME 2.20 p.m. on 24/2; 8.20 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. on 3/3; 10.00 to 11.00 on 9/3.

RANGE Down to 8 m on 24/2, 6 m on 3/3 and 10 m on 9/3.

OPTICS 10×40 binoculars, 20/30×77 'scope.

OBSERVERS Chris Abrams & myself on 24/2 & 3/3 (with Stan Kirk from 10.00 a.m. on 3/3) and myself with others on 9/3.

GENERAL SITUATION On the evening of 21st February, I heard from the warden of Church Wood RSPB Reserve that a flock of 300+ [Common] Redpolls *C. flammea* had been present in the area since December. I at once informed Chris Abrams and, in the light of reports of Arctic Redpoll in Norfolk, we both felt that it would be worth checking the flock for Arctic Redpoll at the first opportunity. On Sunday 24th at 2.20 p.m., we found a flock of 50-60 redpolls at the reserve and CA quickly called my attention to a very pale bird. As I approached, the flock moved slightly and we both spotted a still-paler example. This bird, which we watched for about a minute in good light at c. 10 m, we identified as an Arctic Redpoll. (Unfortunately we were unable to examine the first bird carefully in the time allowed, but subsequent experience suggests that it too was an Arctic Redpoll.) The flock suddenly flew, allowed a brief view whilst perched, but then joined a loose flock of c. 250 birds which would not allow close observation thereafter. On 3rd March, shortly after 8.00 a.m., CA and I found the whole flock, numbering c. 300 birds, quietly feeding in scrub and leaf litter beneath birches. These we were able to follow and watch at ranges down to c. 6 m for most of the next two hours, after which the flock split up and became elusive. On 3rd, the Arctic Redpolls were seen on eight occasions for periods of up to ten minutes at a stretch. Due to the density of the cover, the whole flock could be seen only when the birds flew and perched in trees at greater range. Generally, when feeding on the ground, only about 10-20 birds were visible, and not all those easy to see, at any one time. This and the fact that the birds shifted their ground several times, make it difficult to be absolutely certain about the number of Arctics present. No more than two were seen together at any one time, but plumage details indicate that a minimum of three birds were seen on 3rd March. During this time, I formed the opinion that, of the c. 100 birds that I was able to examine critically, about a quarter to a third showed the characteristics of the nominate race and the rest, save the birds described below, the characteristics of *cabaret*. Subsequent to our discovery of the birds on 3rd March, the Arctic Redpolls were reported by many observers. On 9th March I relocated two Arctic Redpolls with c. 60 Common Redpolls at c. 10.00 which I watched periodically for the next 45 minutes for up to five minutes at a stretch. These birds were watched by a half-dozen or so other observers unknown to me.

The bird observed on 24th February was extremely pale and would seem to be identical to one watched on 3rd March (in the description that follows I refer to this as bird 'A'). Two other birds watched well on 3rd March were similar, but distinguished largely by slightly more heavily streaked flanks (these I have referred to as 'B' & 'C'). Had I not had both birds together I would



Fig. 1. Arctic *Carduelis hornemanni* and Common Redpolls *C. flammea flammea*, Church Wood, Canterbury, Kent, February and March 1991 (J. Cantelo)

1 & 2 = Arctic 'A' 3 & 4 = Arctic 'B/C' 5 = Arctic 'D' 6 = Arctic 7 & 8 = Common *C. f. flammea*

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Mystery photographs

186 On a sunny October morning, while searching for migrants on a scrub-covered coastal headland, a movement in a patch of bracken and bramble catches the eye. After skulking for a few minutes, the bird eventually hops on to an exposed perch, ruffles its plumage, droops its wings and begins to sun itself. By a combination of its pointed, insectivorous bill, plain plumage, structure and jizz, most readers will have realised that last month's mystery bird (plate 13, repeated in colour on page 140) was a warbler.

Most warblers are basically plain, so, to narrow it down to a genus, one has to concentrate initially on structure. This bird has a proportionately long, thick bill (although it should be noted that the bill is foreshortened as its head is slightly turned towards the camera), the head is peaked, with a distinctly sloping forehead, and the body appears rather bulky and the legs sturdy. In combination, this narrows it down to an *Acrocephalus* or a *Hippolais*.

The habitat—gorse, bracken and bramble—would perhaps suggest the former as most *Hippolais* prefer larger bushes, whereas Reed *A. scirpaceus* and Marsh Warblers *A. palustris* are quite frequently to be found grovelling in low vegetation. So how do we eliminate the two commoner *Acrocephalus*? Bill structure is similar, but the bill on this bird is, perhaps, slightly blunter than on Reed or Marsh and it perhaps appears slightly more angled upwards from the face. Also, there is extensive pale coloration on the lower mandible and cutting edges from the base to the tip. In the field, this would be pale orange and would appear more extensive and more obvious than the paler, usually yellower or pinker coloration found on the lower mandible of Reed or, particularly, Marsh Warbler.

The facial pattern is also important when separating the two genera. Reed and Marsh Warblers have a more noticeable dark eye-stripe and a fairly clear-cut supercilium before the eye, whereas *Hippolais*, with the exception of Booted Warbler *H. caligata*, have bland, open faces, with plain lores and, usually, only a relatively faint supercilium. This bird fits the latter. In addition, *Acrocephalus* show, in good light, a distinctly brown eye; this bird has a black eye.

Two other structural differences are important. Reed and Marsh have a rounded tail tip and noticeably long undertail-coverts, extending to about half way between the primary tips and the tail tip. On this bird, the exact shape of the tail is unfortunately difficult to determine, although it does in fact look *slightly* rounded. The undertail-coverts are almost hidden by the drooped wings, but, had it been a Reed or Marsh Warbler, the long undertail-coverts may well have been obvious beyond the wingtips.

So far, everything is pointing towards a *Hippolais*, but is there anything more concrete to go on? Photographs like this can be extremely useful in



illustrating subtle features that are difficult or impossible to see in the field. On this bird, the wing formula is readily visible and reference to the excellent *Identification Guide to European Passerines* (4th edition) by Lars Svensson (1992) is essential. Although aimed primarily at ringers, this guide is a 'must' for serious students of bird identification and is particularly useful for difficult species and for moult and ageing. Its usefulness has increased in recent years with the advancements in optical equipment, often allowing close study of individual feathers actually in the field. Note in particular the long first primary, extending well beyond the tips of the primary coverts, and the relatively short second primary, falling short of the third and fourth primaries (which form the wingtip). Reed and Marsh Warblers have a short first primary (protruding, at most, only a couple of millimetres beyond the primary coverts) and a second primary which is almost as long as the third.

So, this bird is a *Hippolais*, but which one? Concentrate on the primary projection. The exposed primaries beyond the tertial and secondary tips are about half the length of the overlying feathers. This rules out Olive-tree *H. olivetorum* and Icterine Warblers *H. icterina*, both of which are long-winged and have the primary projection approximately equal in length to the tertials/secondaries. Icterine has a wing formula more similar to Reed and Marsh, with a shorter first primary and a second primary close in length to the third, which is the wing point (there is, however, slight overlap in the length of the first primary between Icterine and Melodious *H. polyglotta*). In addition, both Olive-tree Warbler and Icterine Warbler show a prominent pale secondary panel in fresh plumage. This bird does show a reasonable pale panel on its secondaries, but the colour original shows that this is not as white or as striking as that shown by most Icterines. Upcher's Warbler *H. languida* has a longer, darker, tail, with noticeable whitish outer webs to the outer-tail feathers, a more distinct supercilium and a rather longer and slightly heavier bill. Booted has a stronger facial pattern, with a better-defined eye-stripe and supercilium (usually bordered by a slight dark coronal line), and a weaker, more *Phylloscopus*-like bill. Also, it is a smaller, less bulky bird, in many ways reminiscent of a *Phylloscopus*.

So, this leaves us with Melodious and Olivaceous Warblers *H. pallida*. In a black-and-white photograph, their separation is far from easy. They are very similar structurally, with very similar wing formulae which fit the bird in the photograph. Differences in head shape are at best subtle and inconsistent (remember that crown feathers can be raised and lowered at will). Confusion between Melodious and Olivaceous is less likely in real life as they can be separated by their plumage colour. Although some Melodious may, superficially, appear rather drab, good views should always reveal a greenish tint to the upperparts, and yellowish underparts, sometimes strongest on the throat and upper breast. The colour reproduction of this photograph (plate 28) does indeed show the bird to be pale green above and pale primrose below. Olivaceous, on the other hand, is a pallid, grey-brown and whitish looking bird, with more noticeable whitish outer webs to the outer-tail feathers. In real life,

28. Mystery photograph 186

29. Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Southwold, Suffolk, September 1988 (*R. J. Mellis*)

30. Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Israel, March/April 1985 (*Richard G. Smith*)



two behavioural traits are also worth remembering. Olivaceous has a habit of downward tail-dipping (recalling Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*) and it is far more vocal, frequently giving a hard 'chack', perhaps recalling a weak Black-cap *Sylvia atricapilla*. *Acrocephalus* warblers are also more vocal, giving the distinctive 'tchurr' (Reed) or 'churr' or 'stut' (Marsh). Melodious is quieter, but has a sparrow-like chatter.

This Melodious Warbler was photographed by Jack Levene on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, in October 1990. Melodious Warblers have a body moult in late summer, but adults do not moult their remiges and rectrices until they reach their winter quarters. Consequently, these feathers are very worn in autumn. Our bird has clear-cut, fresh edgings to the tertials, secondaries and primaries, so it is, like virtually all autumn Melodious Warblers in Britain and Ireland, a first-winter.

SIMON COLENUTT and KEITH VINICOMBE

Green Edge, Chale Green, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 2JR



31. Mystery photograph 187. Identify the species. Answer next month



Twenty-five years ago...

'The nesting of a pair of Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* on Fetlar, Shetland, in 1967 was the first substantiated record in the wild in the British Isles. Publicity was inevitable and so the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds organised a round-the-clock watch until the young had flown.' (*Brit. Birds* 61: 119, March 1968)

On 28th March 1968, a Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* at Stodmarsh, Kent, was the first of a spring influx which inspired the comment that 'Not for over 100 years have six counties recorded this species in one year.' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 478)



Rats out! Puffins in?

LAST CENTURY, Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde supported a quarter of a million pairs of Puffins *Fratercula arctica*, then common rats *Rattus norvegicus* got ashore. Slowly but surely, Puffins—and other seabirds as well as vegetation—were devastated by the rats.

Puffins have been absent for over one hundred years, but now they stand a real chance of re-establishing themselves at their old haunt.

Bernard Zonfrillo of Glasgow University and George Houston of *Rentokil*, with additional financial assistance from Scottish Natural Heritage, have successfully mounted a two-year campaign to rid the island of rats, which had reached a peak of about 10,000 individuals. Following the second baiting operation last April, Bernard Zonfrillo could find no evidence of rats, and Puffins, probably from the small colony at Sanda Island off the Mull of Kintyre, were again showing an interest in Ailsa Craig. There has also been a marked improvement in the survival rates of other breeding birds, and plants, including some very rare species, are thriving and recolonising areas of the island where rats had exterminated them. Congratulations to the team and to the island's owner, the Marquess of Ailsa, who financed the study. Let us hope that the Puffins start breeding again, soon.

Fr P. G. Kennedy honoured

On 16th November 1992, Major R. F. Rutledge wrote to us: 'I have recently achieved what I have fought for for about 25 years. Ever since Fr Kennedy died, I have wanted a plaque put up on the North Bull in memory of him and his having been the person who got

the place saved and made it a sanctuary. It was erected yesterday!'

North Bull Island makes Dublin a near-unique capital city, for it provides some of the most exciting and accessible birding in Ireland.

Venezuelan Llanos under threat

The Llanos of Venezuela is crossed by numerous rivers which drain two-thirds of Venezuela and flow from the Andes in the west and the coastal ranges to the north into the Orinoco river. During the rainy season this flat savanna plain, which is less than 100 m above sea level, is subject to flooding. Vast post-breeding concentrations of birds occur at the water holes that remain after the waters recede.

The diverse and rich flora and fauna which have adapted to these conditions are now under threat from a project which has already been rejected by the World Bank on economic and environmental grounds. The Venezuelan Government, with money from a Japanese banking consortium, is planning to build several dams, and kilometres of dykes, to produce a navigable river from the west of Venezuela to the Atlantic, which they hope will allow transportation of coal to industrialised centres on the lower Orinoco, encourage intensive agriculture in the area (which the soil cannot support) and allow an increase in the human population. Venezuelan NGOs (including the

Venezuelan Audubon Society) are planning to oppose the project, primarily because it will destroy the Llanos and secondly because it will lead to increased development pressure in the Venezuelan and Colombian Andes, and threaten the forest south of the Orinoco as population increases.

Past experience in Venezuela has shown that international concern is more effective in changing Government plans than protests arising solely from within the country. To support the campaign, please write to the following addresses, expressing your concern as a bird-watcher and a past or potential ecotourist: Dra Beatrix Rangel Mantilla, Ministro de la Secretaria de la Presidencia, Palacio de Mirallores, Caracas, D.F., Venezuela, with a copy to: Ing. Victor Gamboa, Presidente, Corpoturismo, Torre Oeste, Parque Central, Caracas, Venezuela. The mail system is poor in Venezuela, so your letters can be sent via Llanos, c/o K. Swallow, 32 Templegate Close, Leeds LS15 0PJ. (Contributed by John Swallow)

Free condors

After the brave decision to remove all the California Condors *Gymnogyps californianus* from the wild, because of concerns for their safety and the condition of their vast foraging area, the authorities started a release programme last January. A pair was released, along with two Andean Condors *Vultur gryphus* which were to act as 'helpers'.

If all goes to plan, six of the 12 California Condors that were hatched in captivity last spring (at the Los Angeles Zoo and the San

Diego Wild Animal Park) will be transported to the Sespe Condor Sanctuary in the Los Padres National Forest for release into the wild. The two adults will have refamiliarised themselves with the terrain and will act as a focus of attention for the new arrivals, so the Andean Condors, their job done, will be recaptured and returned to captivity. (Perhaps, however, having done such a good job, they could be returned to the Andes and 'put out to carrion'.)

SWLA Bursary

In conjunction with Lloyds Private Banking, the Society of Wildlife Artists is setting up a Bursary scheme for young wildlife artists aged 15-25. The aim is to provide young artists with opportunities that might not otherwise be possible. The amount of the award will be up to £500 per application and may assist with such things as education, travel expenses and material costs, or in other ways. Applications for the current year must be submitted by 2nd April 1993. For an application form, please send a SAE to Wildlife Bursary, 3 Dene Drive, Orpington, Kent BR6 9EB.

European merger

The European Ornithological Atlas Committee and the International Bird Census Committee have now merged, bringing the co-ordination of all European bird surveys and censuses within the aegis of a single body, the European Bird Census Council.

Binding your 'BB'

Binding costs £17.95 per volume. The correct address is: London Journal Bindery, Roslin Road, London W3 8DL.

Irish research conference

The Second National Ornithological Research Conference, held at the University College, Cork, on 28th November 1992, was another landmark in Irish ornithology.

In 1985, over 100 bird researchers attended a one-day meeting addressed by the then Director of the BTO, Dr Raymond O'Connor. Though Raymond has since moved to the United States, he returned to his native Ireland to give the key-note address (on biodiversity with respect to bird conservation) at the second research meeting.

The 120 bird-research projects currently underway in Ireland range from the studies of Roscate Terns *Sterna dougallii* at Rockabill, which were described by John Coveney, the IWC Conservation Officer, to research on Dippers *Cinclus cinclus*, described by Dr John O'Halloran, the Conference organiser.

Though it was only a one-day meeting, there were over a dozen short presentations, including an account of bird-research programmes underway at the Wildlife Service, described by John Wilson, and publication records of Irish ornithologists by well-known Irish ornithologist, Clive Hutchinson. It was truly an all-Ireland meeting, with Jim Wells giving an account of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in Northern Ireland and Clive Mellon of the RSPB on breeding-wader sites in Northern Ireland. Irish ornithology is thriving! (Contributed by Dr John O'Halloran)

Conference correction

The RSPB Members' Weekend on 2nd-4th April will be held at the University of Sheffield (not Lancaster University, *Brit. Birds* 85: 668).

Raptor conference

The Raptor Research Foundation, which has held regular meetings in the autumn in the USA, now plans a series of meetings in Europe. The first of these will be held jointly with The Hawk and Owl Trust on 11th-15th September 1993, at the University of Kent, Canterbury. The Conference will include general sessions on raptors and owls, and symposia on harriers, natural cavities versus nest-boxes, and solving human/raptor conflicts. Offers of papers, posters or workshops should be sent to Dr Mike Nicholls, Christ Church College, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1QU; booking forms can be obtained from Mrs Sue Dewar, 6 Glendevon Road, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire RG5 4PH.

Twinned wetlands

At a conference organised by Centre Naturopa in September 1992, Romania and France signed a twinning agreement between the Danube Delta and the Rhône Delta (the Camargue). It is hoped that this link will help to improve the protection of both areas and the rational use of their resources.

Solway SPA

Good news! The Upper Solway Flats and Marshes has been declared a Special Protection Area for Birds and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. This 30,000-ha site, which straddles the border between England and Scotland, abuts the Rockcliffe Marshes, which were designated an SPA in 1986.

This area holds the entire Svalbard population of Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* during the winter (at least half of the year), as well as significant numbers of Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* – in all, during winter, 43,000 wildfowl and 79,000 waders.

Borneo's birds

A Checklist of the Birds of Borneo is in an advanced state of preparation for the well-known BOU series. Any distributional or breeding data, either unpublished or published in less-obvious journals, will be most welcome, and, if used, will be fully acknowledged. Please contact the author, Dr Clive F. Mann, 123 Hartswood Road, London W12 9NG.

Boost the BTO

The BTO is a vital element in British ornithology. Its workforce of mostly amateur fieldworkers, willing and competent to carry out large-scale surveys and censuses (not merely for the scientific interest of the results, but essential for conservation planning), is the envy of the world.

It is good news, therefore, that BTO membership reached 9,300 in December 1992 (*BTO News* 184: 3). This year, 1993, sees the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the BTO. It would be a great birthday present for our Trust if its membership reached the milestone of 10,000 members.

If you are not already a BTO member, why not join now? It costs only £17 (or £14 if you pay by Direct Debit). Write to BTO, The National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

The Lark's Descent

'Birds and farming', the subject of the BTO's Annual Birdwatchers' Conference held at Swanwick, Derbyshire, on 4th-6th December 1992, was most topical, with so much recent national and international news relating to agriculture.

Chris Knights set the tone: not only does he farm about 3,600 ha in Breckland, but he is also a superb photographer. A shot of 30 or more Stone-curlews *Burhinus oediuemus* in flight over his crops was testament to his attitude to the business of farming and to the birds that he encourages.

On the Saturday, Tony Hardy highlighted the recent changes to farming practices and how these have affected breeding species; Rob Fuller expanded on the same topic by showing how research can help to explain why farming practices can affect bird populations; Dr Dick Potts, in his Witherby Memorial Lecture, went on to ask about the future, concentrating on the Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* and its relationship with arable farmland: insecticides are reducing the food available for the chicks except on farms which have not adopted modern practices, and future success will depend on changes to the CAP and appropriate management of rotational set-aside, conservation headlands and other measures.

On Sunday, Juliet Vickery gave a brilliant account of the history of the dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, relating this to the present conflict between its conservation and farming; Jeremy Wilson gave preliminary

results from the BTO birds and organic farming project, which showed that birds do seem to benefit where there is a diversity of stock and crops and an absence of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides; then three single-species stories were presented, on the Corn Crake *Cix crex* and its relationship with a crofting community, by Tim Stowe, and two on the Corn Bunting *Miliaria calaudra*, a local study by Nicholas Watts and a wider look by Paul Donald at what has been happening in Britain (both species have shown dramatic declines in recent decades, attributed to changes in agricultural practices); and finally Graham Tucker showed how agricultural change throughout Europe has put over one-third of breeding species at risk. The Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* is a good indicator species around which a strategy for conservation could be created. The relationship between farming and birds is complex, but Dr Luc Schifferli summed it all up with his comment: 'Farming should be done in such a way that there is no need for conservation.'

The BTO's Jubilee Medal was presented to Harry Green, and Tucker Medals to Chris Du Feu and Peter Catchpole.

A new event, devised by Lys Hall, was a wine-tasting with an ornithological flavour. Among several quizzes, our own *BB* Mystery Bird Photograph Competition produced two all-correct entries, from Ann Scott and Tim Cleaves, and Ann won the draw for the bottle of champagne. (RP)

Help needed in Israel

Experienced birdwatchers are required for the annual Raptor, Stork and Pelican Migration Survey in the Northern Valleys of Israel during 10th August to 20th October 1993.

In 45 days during autumn 1991, some 806,000 migrating birds were counted, including 580,000 raptors of 30 different species, 190,000 White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* and 36,000 White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*.

Participants must be experienced, capable and willing to watch migration for a minimum of eight hours a day, for a minimum of three weeks, and will have to cover the cost of travel to and from Israel. Food and lodging in Israel will be supplied. Write, enclosing details of your previous experience, to Ron Beer, Autumn Survey, Israel Raptor Information Center (IRIC), Har-Gilo, Doar Na Zifon Yehuda, 90907 Israel; tel. 972-2-932383/4, 972-3-826802; fax. 972-2-932385.

Help needed in Turkey

The momentum is growing to establish national lists of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) following the publication of the all-Europe list by the ICBP in 1989. The UK list was published last year. Turkey has done remarkably well to publish its own inventory so quickly (1989), but inevitably it is far from complete and lacking in a lot of up-to-date information. *BB* readers visiting Turkey could provide valuable help with survey work in a number of good birding areas: full details from Murat Yazar, IBA Project Officer, PK 18, 80810 Bebek-Istanbul, Turkey; fax (90-1) 279 55 44.

New BBRC member

As the longest-serving member, John Marchant leaves the Rarities Committee in April. Joining the Committee after an untested election is Andy Stoddart from Norwich, Norfolk.

Hong Kong Bird Report

There are so many monthly, bi-monthly or annual publications that, obviously, we cannot review all of them every year. We must pick those which contain items which are likely to be of especial interest to *BB* readers.

The *Hong Kong Bird Report 1991* qualifies, with 204 pages, many useful colour photographs of difficult-to-identify species, and papers on 13 species new to Hong Kong (Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Upland Buzard *Buteo hemilasius*, White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea*, Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*, Singing Lark (Singing Bushlark) *Mirafra javanica* *cantillans*, Sky Lark (Northern Skylark) *Alauda arvensis*, Japanese Waxwing *Bombicilla japonica*, Golden-headed (Bright-capped) *Cisticola*

Cisticola exilis, Blunt-winged Warbler *Acrocephalus concinens*, Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola*, Pale Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis unicolor*, Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*, Japanese Reed Bunting *E. yessoensis*) and a major paper on 'Identification, status and distribution of small *Acrocephalus* warblers in Eastern China' by Peter R. Kennerley and Paul J. Leader, with paintings by Alan Harris and many colour photographs. All this is in addition to other papers, short notes and the universal systematic list.

Copies can be obtained (price £10.75 including p&p, or £11.45 to the rest of Europe) from S. Anstruther, Barlavington Estate 1, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 0LG. (*JTRS*)

The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust

Throughout his long and distinguished career, which spanned over 60 years, Eric Hosking OBE, Hon FRPS, FRIPP, was widely acknowledged as one of the world's most eminent natural history photographers. His work was admired, published and exhibited throughout the world. For many years, he travelled the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, presenting lectures, illustrated with slides of his most impressive pictures. The superb quality of his images, his meticulous care for his subjects and his boundless enthusiasm inspired three generations of young naturalists and photographers to follow in his footsteps. There can be no doubt that his photographs have made a significant contribution to our wider understanding of and concern for the living world.

Eric's interests, however, were not confined simply to natural history photography; they ranged across a wide spectrum of matters ornithological. He was a perceptive and sensitive observer of birdlife, and the thousands of hours spent patiently waiting in his hides produced many interesting and valuable observations, which were meticulously recorded in his notebooks. He was always keenly interested in painters and bird art. Some of his most treasured possessions were paintings which he had gathered together and enjoyed for many years. He was an avid collector of books, and his shelves were a treasure trove of ornithological volumes, many items of considerable historical interest in their own right.

It has been decided to commemorate the life and work of this remarkable and much-loved ornithologist by establishing a trust in his memory. The aim of the Eric Hosking Trust will be to sponsor ornithological research through the media of writing, photography, painting or illustration. It is anticipated that bursaries will be awarded to suitable candidates once a year. The Trust has been awarded charitable status and a Board of Trustees, consisting of Professor Richard Chandler, Dr Jim Flegg, Robert Gillmor, David Hosking, Derek Moore, Dr Tim Sharrock and Martin Withers, has been established. The Trust will be launched at a major retrospective exhibition of Eric Hosking's vintage prints to be opened at The Wildlife Art Gallery in Lavenham, Suffolk, on 24th April 1993. In addition, a volume of Eric's black-and-white photographs, with a text specially written by Dr Jim Flegg, is to be published by HarperCollins in autumn 1993. A limited edition of 1,000 specially bound and cased copies of this book has been very generously donated to the Trust by HarperCollins. These will be available for sale at the opening of the exhibition.

Anyone wishing to make a contribution to the Trust, subscribe to the limited edition or requiring further details should contact David Hosking, Pages Green House, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QA; telephone 0728 861 113; fax 0728 860 222.

Irish Birds

Real value for money, at £6.00 plus £1.00 postage, the latest issue of *Irish Birds* (vol. 4, no. 4) runs to a massive 180 pages. The 'Irish Bird Report' for 1991, compiled by Oran O'Sullivan and Patrick Smiddy, occupies 40 pages, with reports on common birds as well as rarity records. The year's highlights were influxes of Little Gulls *Larus minutus*, Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Little Auks *Alle alle* and Bohemian Waxwings *Bombicilla garrulus*, breeding by Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca* in Co. Wicklow, and the possibility of breeding by Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (two adults and a juvenile seen in Co. Clare in early September).

There are also main papers on the breeding waders of Northern Ireland (by J. K. Partridge and K. W. Smith), on quarry-nesting by Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* (by Niall Moore, Paul Kelly and Fiona Lang), on the birds of Ballymacoda, Co. Cork (by Patrick Smiddy), on the diet of wintering Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* (by D. J. Andrews) and on the diet of coastal-breeding Common Ravens *Corvus corax* (by S. D. Berrow).

There is a thorough 32-page compilation of abstracts of current ornithological research in Ireland, compiled by John O'Halloran, Clive Hutchinson, Thomas C. Kelly and H. John Nilson; and the 24-page report for 1991 on ringing in Ireland.

The address of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy is: Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

Thanks from a friend

The latest issue of the American Birding Association's bi-monthly *Birding* (vol. 24, no. 5, October 1992) launches a new feature, 'Photo Note', and courteously acknowledges that inspiration for the idea came from *BB*. The first species covered in this series is the enigmatic La Sagra's Flycatcher *Myiarchus sagrae*.

Other features in this issue include updates on the ABA checklist, features on Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* and Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, birding in the Aleutians, and the usual 'Photo Quiz' (i.e. 'Mystery Photographs' US-style). Good value. ABA membership is US\$30 (US\$37 or £20 for Europe); write to American Birding Association, PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80931, USA.

Silly corner

A few odds and ends have found their way to us recently. We liked a Nobby, mentioned in the photo credits of the 1991 *Norfolk Bird Report* (evidence of Smokies infiltrating the county?), and, from the pages of this august journal (85: 629), the courses advertised on Stockholm Island off the Pembrokeshire coast. Our favourite, though, was a postcard bought at Dublin airport and sent to us by Estlin Waters: it is apparently one of a series featuring Irish wildlife and shows a rather nicely photographed Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*.

Dennis Coutts has sent us news of two rare buntings seen on the same day in Shetland. Nothing strange about that, surely?

Especially not for the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* and *The Shetland Times*, which reported the said buntings as 'yellow-brown bunting' and 'Pallas's grasshopper bunting'.

Oran O'Sullivan has sent us the Typo of the Year. He reports that "The Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Home of Lifers and Solitary, received a communication from Naturschutzbund Deutschlands addressed to "Irish JAIL.BIRD Conservancy". As they say in Ireland, "Stimmt Ihre Adresse?"

New RBBP Secretary

Dr Malcolm Ogilvie has taken over from Robert Spencer as Secretary of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. All correspondence should now be addressed to the RBBP at Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay, Argyll PA49 7UN.

Change of address of county recorder

John Dunnett, County Recorder for Cleveland, has moved to Burnside, Saltburn Bank, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Cleveland TS12 1HH.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—Northeast
Dave Holman—East Anglia
Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland
Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland
Alan Richards—Midlands
Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland
David Tomlinson—Southeast
Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales
Keith Vinicombe—Southwest
John Wilson—Northwest



Monthly marathon

The grey-and-black-and-white bird in December's puzzle picture (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 322) was named by entrants as:

Caspian Tern <i>Sterna caspia</i>	(42%)
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	(40%)
Laughing Gull <i>Larus atricilla</i>	(6%)
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	(4%)
Sabine's Gull <i>L. sabini</i>	(4%)
Forster's Tern <i>S. forsteri</i>	(2%)
Royal Tern <i>S. maxima</i>	(1%)
Sandwich Tern <i>S. sandwicensis</i>	(1%)

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The three leading contestants – Roy Hargreaves, Hannu Jännes and Dave Nurney – all got it right, each achieving sequences of 20 correct answers in a row, so this long-running Marathon continues (but see below for a forthcoming change in format). One of them must, surely, soon be the outright winner of the SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. Unusually, the most-named species was not the right answer. The bird was a Gull-billed Tern, photographed in Texas, USA, in August 1992 by Dr Richard Chandler.

New racing rules

As soon as the current 'Marathon' is won, new rules will come into operation. No longer will it be necessary to identify a string of photographs without a single mistake. Each hurdle will provide a score, and competitors will accumulate these scores. The more difficult the hurdle, the higher the score.

Each stage will carry the score of the percentage of entrants who got it wrong. Thus, a bird identified by 58% of competitors will score 42 points; one named correctly by 86% of entrants will score only 14; but one identified by just 4% of entrants will score a massive 96.

The first person to achieve a score of 500 or more, or the person with the highest score after 15 photographs, will win the SUNBIRD holiday. (If two or more leading entrants have identical scores, the Marathon will continue until there is an outright winner.)

These new rules, formulated during a discussion with Bob Scott, will not eliminate entrants just because they make one slip. As in a real race, someone who stumbles and drops behind can still catch up and overtake the leaders.

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32. 'Monthly marathon' (thirty-second stage in fifth contest: photograph number 81). Identify the species. Read the rules on pages 25-26 in the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th April 1993



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th January to 14th February 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Male, Whitegate (Co. Cork), January to at least 8th February.

American Black Duck *A. rubripes* Initially at Ballycotton, now at Middleton (both Co. Cork), 2nd to at least 14th February.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Male moved from Oxford Island, Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh), to Hillsborough Lake (Co. Down), from 2nd to at least 14th February.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Marazion (Cornwall), 31st January; presumed same Drift Reservoir (Cornwall), to 6th February.

Iceland Gull *L. glaucoideus* Influx from mid January, including at least 170 scattered throughout Britain and Ireland.

Ross's Gull *Rhodestethia rosea* Porthgwarra

(Cornwall), 18th January; Kinnaird Head, Fraserburgh (Grampian), 17th January, another 23rd-25th January, possibly a third on 26th and one staying until 30th; North Shields (Tyne & Wear), 30th January; Inverness (Highland), 30th January to 14th February; Stornoway Harbour (Western Isles) and Flamborough Head (Humberside), 31st January; Isle of Lewis (Western Isles), 3rd February.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* Near Wick, Caithness (Highland), 27th-31st January.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Boscombe (Dorset), 25th January to at least 14th February.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* Single of race *humei*, Bridlington (Humberside), 11th February.

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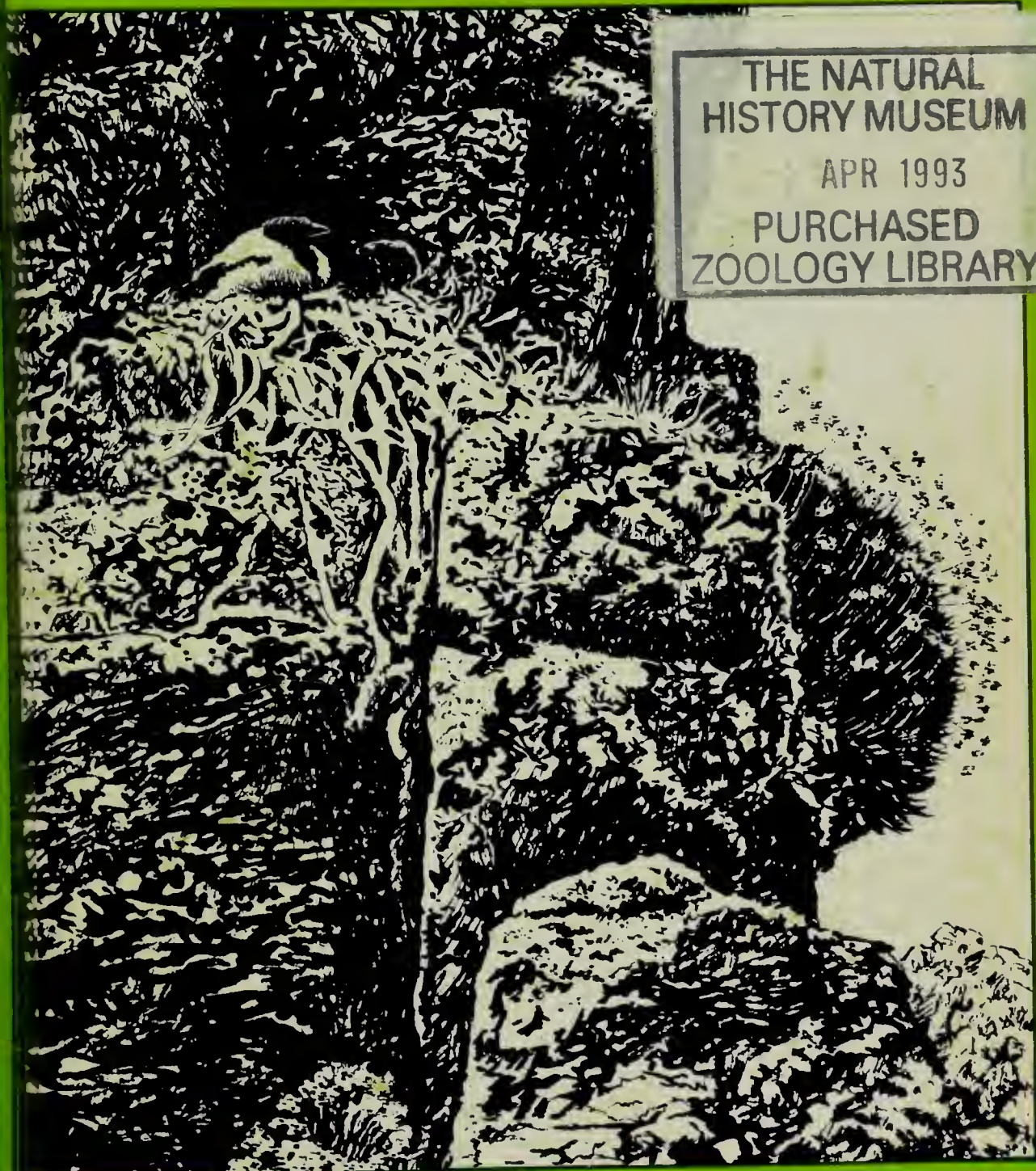
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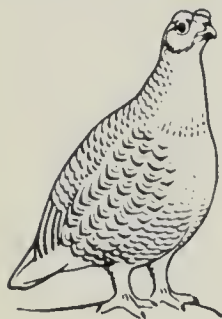
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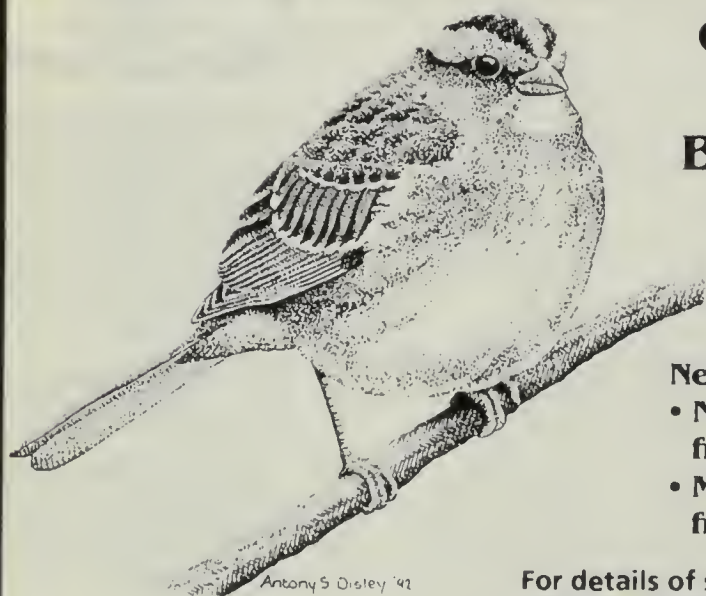
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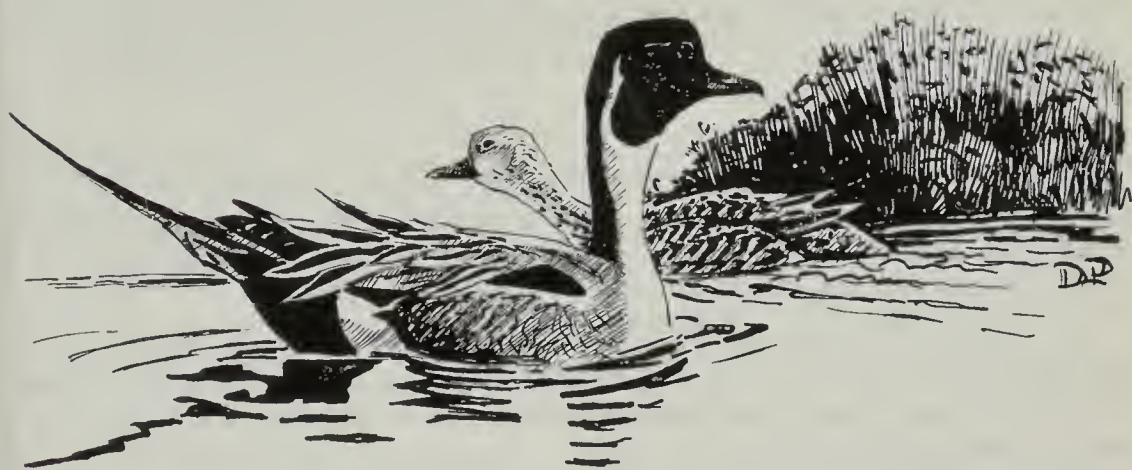
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History of the Northern Pintail breeding in Britain and Ireland

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The Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* is a sporadic breeding species throughout its range in Eurasia and North America. It is often reported to breed irregularly, despite apparently catholic nesting requirements. Closer analysis of the species' breeding preferences, however, suggests that, in fact, the habitat requirements are quite precise, but it is the ephemeral nature of features of the habitat that makes conditions less predictable than in the case of related dabbling ducks.

In North America, the species has shown a catastrophic 55% decline in its population during 1955-88, apparently owing to enormous loss of nesting habitat in the prairie pot-hole country (Williams 1990). Duck production varies greatly, being dependent on availability of wetlands created by erratic patterns of precipitation (Crissey 1969) and agricultural drainage (Krapu 1977).

In detailed studies, Northern Pintails preferred areas of sparse vegetation cover, favouring herbaceous plantings established specifically for wildlife or to combat soil erosion. Areas managed for a hay crop were of secondary importance, while fallow grasslands were least favoured* (Klett *et al.* 1988). Fewer than 5% of nests were in wetlands, and the majority of nest sites were natural depressions on open prairie with no cover.

In North America, Northern Pintails nest farther from shallow water than do other duck species, moving broods to nursery areas up to 3 km (usually 1-2 km) from nest sites (Keith 1961; Bellrose 1979; Duncan 1983). Duncan (1987) found that nests on islands comprised only a small proportion of the total, and also argued that this dispersion pattern may have evolved in order to reduce densities and hence offer a predator-avoidance strategy. The adoption of such a strategy, however, has a cost in terms of potential increase in predation caused by increased distance from nest site to duckling nursery.

Pre-nesting females feed on aquatic invertebrates, principally in wetland habitats subject to frequent drying-out; they always select shallow-water wetlands after flooding, and also take earthworms forced to the surface by elevated water levels (Krapu 1974).

The species' nesting requirements in Eurasia are less well known, although it consistently selects shallow aquatic habitats in open grassland areas, most frequently eutrophic waters. Such habitats are subject to most threat from modification through drought, disappearance of temporary pools, pollution, late-spring flooding and drainage (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

In Europe, wintering numbers have remained stable in recent years, although there is little monitoring of breeding populations (Monval & Piroi 1989). Like many other waterfowl species, the Northern Pintail has an essentially Continental breeding distribution, ranging from the northern tundra, through the temporary wetlands of the steppe to some isolated Mediterranean sites. It winters along the mild western fringe of the European landmass, and in the nineteenth century some breeders colonised these more oceanic parts of its range, away from the Continental stronghold. Numbers breeding in western Europe remain generally small, however, with a few pairs in France, 200 pairs in Denmark, 130 pairs in Germany, 20 pairs in Austria and small populations elsewhere, although larger numbers breed in Fennoscandia, including about 20,000 in Finland (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

The Northern Pintail, like several other duck species, first colonised Britain in the late nineteenth century. Proved breeding was first reported from Inverness-shire, in 1869, and the first English record followed in 1910, from Kent. Nesting was first reported from Orkney around 1907 (Noble 1908; Hale & Aldworth 1910), and these islands have since become the British stronghold of the species, supporting 17 out of a possible 39 breeding pairs in 1989 (Spencer *et al.* 1991) and with 22-26 potential breeding pairs found in 1991 during the first extensive survey (Meek in prep.). The total British breeding population was estimated at about 50 pairs in the late 1960s (Sharrock 1976), including about 20 pairs in Scotland, where there is little suggestion of any change in status in recent years (Thom 1986).

The analysis presented here reviews the status and distribution of Northern Pintails nesting in Britain and Ireland, in an attempt to determine the extent

to which the current restricted breeding population is protected under national and international site-safeguard programmes.

Methods

Data in county avifaunas and annual bird reports were used to compile a national picture for the years 1983-90, and these provide the basis for estimates of the total breeding numbers. Data were also kindly provided by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). The British Trust for Ornithology Nest Record Scheme holds 18 cards for Northern Pintail; these records, and accompanying details of nest-site characteristics, were also incorporated.

Results

England

In England, much of the Northern Pintail breeding population is associated with coastal wetlands. Pairs frequently summer inland, however, including in three consecutive summers in Northamptonshire since 1980.

SOUTHERN ENGLAND

KENT

The first apparently genuine record of breeding in England by wild Northern Pintails came from Kent in 1910, but regular nesting did not appear to follow. Pairs summered on the North Kent Marshes in the late 1940s, and a female with small young was seen in 1947: the species was again present in 1948, and a brood of three was recorded in 1949 (Gillham & Homes 1950). During the period 1952-76, breeding was restricted to this site, with six pairs in 1952, although none bred the following year when flooding left the marshes unsuitable for breeding waterfowl; one to five pairs bred annually during 1957-67 and single pairs in 1971, 1972 and 1974. Summering individuals were recorded in many of the other years, with occasional records also from the Stour Valley wetlands and Romney Marsh (Taylor *et al.* 1981). Since that time, summering has been regular at Elmley Marshes, but no breeding has been confirmed since 1981 (one brood at Elmley and four at Cliffe) and 1982 (a pair bred at Elmley and pairs summered at two other sites). The species summered at two to four sites during 1984-88, and with suitable management could doubtless consolidate its presence in the county. (*Kent Bird Reports*; I. Hodgson *in litt.*)

SUSSEX

The species bred in Sussex in 1925 and 1936, while a pair attempted to breed in 1970. In the Rye area, pairs remained late in spring throughout the 1980s, and summering individuals have been reported from Thorney Island; several pairs were recorded in May 1984, for instance, but breeding has rarely been confirmed. Feral Northern Pintails from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre at Arundel often breed and may raise young (e.g. a brood of four in 1984), but generally none survives to fledging and this is not thought to be an important source of records. A female with three young was seen at Rye in 1988, the only recent breeding record. (*Sussex Bird Reports*)

HAMPSHIRE

Several pairs summered in Langstone Harbour in 1979 and one pair in 1983, but there has been no hint of breeding in the county. (Cohen & Taverner 1972; *Hampshire Bird Reports*; E. J. Wiseman *in litt.*)

DORSET

The small Dorset population is thought to be of feral origin, but individuals have summered regularly in the Lodmoor/Radipole Lake area since 1983, when a female was seen with three young, the first breeding record in the county. (*Dorset Bird Reports*)

CORNWALL

The report of a pair nesting at Skewjack Pond, Sennen, in 1938 was considered unreliable. Occasional summering individuals have been recorded, but there is a history of feral releases in

the county which may have resulted in records being incomplete. The only recent breeding record was of a female with two young on a freshwater pool on the Lizard Peninsula in 1978. In addition, a released (but pinioned) pair bred annually near Truro for some years prior to 1985, their free-flying offspring dispersing usually in June; information since 1985 is lacking. (*Cornwall Bird Reports*; S. M. Christophers *in litt.*)

EASTERN ENGLAND

LINCOLNSHIRE

The species bred in the fenlands in 1940, 1952 and 1953 and possibly in 1951 (Smith & Cornwallis 1955), but there are no recent records, although late-stayers often remain in some areas (*Lincolnshire Bird Reports*). Summering individuals occur very rarely, presumed to be pricked birds (G. P. Catley *in litt.*).

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The species may have first bred in 1928, since a drake noted among Aylesbury ducks at Earith in 1929 had been raised from a downy duckling taken from the wild in the previous year (Lack 1934). Breeding was finally proved in 1947, on the Ouse Washes, and in 1951, on the Nene Washes, since when the species has bred sporadically to the present day (Bircham 1989). In recent years, breeding success has been extremely variable, dependent often on the unpredictable water levels: too low a level in spring may lead to the abandonment of the site altogether, while late-spring flooding can wash out nests across the entire floodlands. Records for 1977-90 are summarised in table 1. Away from the Ouse Washes, pairs summered at two sites in 1986 and a pair bred on the Nene Washes in 1988. The species is exceptionally rare in summer away from the washlands.

Table 1. Numbers of Northern Pintails *Anas acuta* breeding in Cambridgeshire, 1977-90

Data from *Cambridge Bird Reports* and the RBBP

Year	No. pairs in spring	No. sites	No. nests known	No. broods located
1977	2	1	0	2
1978	1	1	0	0
1979	0	4	0	5
1980	2	1	?	2
1981	6	2	0	1
1982	8	1	0	0
1983	2-3	2	?	2-3
1984	?	1	1	0
1985	?	1	2	0
1986	?	2	1	0
1987	4+	2	1	0
1988	4-6	2	1	2
1989	2+	2	1	1
1990	6	3	0	0

NORFOLK

Two pairs on Roudham Heath in the Brecks in 1929 were considered at the time to have been among the first breeding in England, but none appears to have bred subsequently until 1949, when a pair reared young on Breydon Marshes. Unsuccessful breeding attempts followed in 1950-53 and 1956-58, but with no records since apparently, although one or two pairs nested at Cley during 1958-60. (Seago 1977; *Norfolk Bird and Mammal Reports*)

SUFFOLK

Northern Pintails first bred in the county after the 1937 floods, when a nest was found at Delft Marsh, Lakenheath. A female with a brood was seen at Minsmere in 1951, where breeding was probably attempted in 1967 and 1972 (Payn 1978). Since 1950, the species has summered with

great regularity at Minsmere, Walberswick and Benacre Broad; in 1987, a pair almost certainly nested and individuals were seen at at least four other sites. (*Suffolk Bird Reports*; P. Murphy *in litt.*)

ESSEX

In 1965, a pair attempted to nest at Hanningfield Reservoir, and the species summered in several subsequent years. Breeding was not proved, however, until 1970, when a pair raised five young at Langenhoe Marsh; in the following year, a nest with nine eggs on a saltmarsh at Rat Island in northeast Essex was destroyed by a high tide (Cox 1984). It was not until 1983 that breeding was again proved: a pair with nine young. In 1985, a female was observed with six ducklings at Old Hall Marshes. In 1989, an apparently wild pair reared three juveniles in a wildfowl collection close to the 1983 site, all departing when the family fledged. (*Essex Bird Reports*)

NORTHEAST ENGLAND

YORKSHIRE

The species bred at Skipwith Common in 1932 and 1938, at Driffield in 1962, and probably at Pulfen Bog in 1966 (Mather 1986). Breeding occurred again in 1983 and 1989 (RBBP).

TEES-SIDE

Pairs bred at Cowpen Marsh in 1954 and 1961. The origins of individuals summering since 1959, however, are questionable, since feral stock were introduced onto Rossmere Park Lake, West Hartlepool, and their full-winged offspring were permitted to fly free (Stead 1964). Occasional individuals are recorded in summer, e.g. at Saltholme Pool and up to five on Cowpen Marsh in 1977. (*Cleveland Bird Reports*)

NORTHUMBERLAND

The first possible breeding was reported from Prestwick Carr in the mid nineteenth century, and in 1912 it was considered that the species might still nest. One or two pairs bred on Northumbrian lakes in 1916 and 1917, since when the only proof of breeding seems to be a record of a female and four downy young in May 1945. (Galloway & Meek 1978; N. Rossiter *in litt.*)

DURHAM

First breeding was in 1985, at a small moorland reservoir, although regular visits since have failed to prove any subsequent nesting. Although small numbers linger late on the marshes on the north side of Teesmouth, no breeding has been reported in recent years. (T. Armstrong *in litt.*)

NORTHWEST ENGLAND

CHESHIRE

The first breeding record for the county involved a drake Northern Pintail paired with a female Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* which bred near Knutsford in 1890. A brood of five ducklings 'barely able to fly' was seen at the sludge lagoons on Frodsham Marshes in 1969, following summering records in the previous year; pairs also attempted to nest at the same site in the three subsequent years, apparently unsuccessfully. The species summered at Rostherne Mere in 1977, 1978 and 1981, but breeding was never proved (Guest *et al.* 1992). Up to 13 have summered regularly at Woolston Eyes since 1983, including four males on 10th June 1983, though with no evidence of breeding (T. Broome *in litt.*); recent drainage of the most important bed at the site has probably reduced the possibility of successful breeding in the immediate future.

LANCASHIRE

The species may have bred on the Ribble in 1961 and at Mere Brow in 1970 (not 1967 as stated by Spencer 1973), and did breed on the Ribble in 1972 and 1973 (Greenhalgh 1975). Females with ducklings seen at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre at Martin Mere in 1978 and 1983 were assumed to have come from the collection. Since 1960, the species has been recorded frequently from the Leighton Moss and Freckleton areas, but with few cases of probable or confirmed breeding. (*Lancashire Bird Reports*; M. Jones *in litt.*)

GREATER MANCHESTER

Although Northern Pintails may stay late in suitable habitats (e.g. at Pennington/Lightshaw in 1982; at Lightshaw Hall Flash in 1986), the only breeding record involves a case of suspected hybridisation with Mallard in 1991. (*Greater Manchester Bird Reports*; T. S. Goss *in litt.*)

CUMBRIA

Pairs bred at Clark-in-Cartmel and on the Leven estuary in 1965, near Appleby in 1968, on the Solway Firth in 1973, 1976 and 1982, and in the Carlisle/Eden area in 1982. In 1983, the species bred at three sites and was present in the breeding season at a further two. Recently, individuals have summered in most years. (Hutcheson undated; M. Carrier *in litt.*)

Scotland

Since 1965, annual breeding has been reported only from Caithness and Orkney, but even there regular censuses have not been carried out and assessment of trends is difficult. In addition, sporadic breeding records have come from Berwick (1970, 1980), Loch Leven (1962), Perth (1974, 1976), Angus (1970), Ross & Cromarty (about 1970) and Shetland (1977). Records from Renfrew, Dumbarton and Bute in the 1930s and 1940s may relate to escapes (Thom 1986).

SOUTHWEST SCOTLAND

A pair bred at Glencaple in 1949 (Baxter & Rintoul 1953) and at other sites in 1970 and 1992, but breeding has seemingly not become established in Dumfries. The species has regularly attempted to breed in Galloway, however, where, during 1953-92, Donald Watson (*in litt.*) recorded up to three pairs in most years: nests were found in 1960 and 1970, and broods seen in 1953, 1965 (two), 1966 (two), 1968 (perhaps as many as five), 1971, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1980 (two); in 1976, eggs were laid but did not hatch, while in 1978 two broods were reared and a further three nests flooded out (RBBP; D. Watson *in litt.*). Unfortunately, in most recent years, although individuals have summered in traditional breeding areas, there have been no records of successful nesting from well-watched localities, so the species may now be lost as a regular breeder. There were no summer records in 1992 (D. Watson *in litt.*).

Recent breeding data from Argyll are presented in table 2. The stronghold is the island of Tiree, where Northern Pintails were first known to breed in 1951 (Boyd 1958) and again in 1969 (Gillam & Jacobs 1971); two pairs bred in 1985, four broods appeared in 1986 and 1987, and five or six pairs nested in 1989 (Stroud 1989; *Argyll Bird Reports*). Northern Pintails attempted to nest on Skye in 1889 (Harvie-Brown & MacPherson 1904), but the island supports little suitable habitat for the species at present.

Table 2. Numbers of Northern Pintails *Anas acuta* breeding in Argyll, 1977-90

Data from *Scottish Bird Reports* and the RBBP

Year	No. pairs present	No. sites known	No. broods located
1977	0	0	0
1978	3	?	2
1979	2	2	2
1980	3	2	1
1981	0	0	0
1982	0	0	0
1983	0	0	0
1984	0	0	0
1985	2	2	2
1986	1	0	0
1987	1	1	1
1988	2	1	1
1989	5	1	5
1990	0	0	0

SOUTHEAST SCOTLAND

Loch Leven was a stronghold of this duck from the time of first proved breeding in 1898, although adjacent areas were not colonised (Berry 1939) and it has not bred regularly in the area at all since 1939. In Fife, the species bred at Loch Gally in 1920, Cullaloe in 1928, Ballo Lochs in 1934, Kinghorn Loch in 1935, Tentsmuir in 1972 and 1983, and Cameron Reservoir in 1981 (Smout 1986).

In the Borders, a pair was present on Threipmuir in May 1904, and a nest was found near Listonshiels in 1912 (Munro 1988). Although two nests were found in Selkirkshire in 1901, the species has always been no more than sporadic in the Borders (Murray 1986).

NORTHEAST SCOTLAND

Berry (1939) mentioned one regular site in Morayshire, where the species also bred in 1970, but otherwise it is a scarce and irregular breeder; there are no recent records, and no breeding occurred during 1981-84 (Buckland *et al.* 1990). Pairs nested on the Insh Marshes in the Spey Valley in 1971 and possibly also in 1976 (Dennis 1984).

In the 1970s, the species summered regularly at two sites in Angus, with a maximum of eight pairs in 1979, but there are very few records of late-stayers from the 1980s, although three pairs in late April 1988 suggest that the species may yet breed again.

NORTH AND NORTHWEST SCOTLAND

The Northern Pintail was not mentioned as a breeding species in Orkney by Buckley & Harvie-Brown (1891). Noble (1908) recorded a few breeding at a certain spot, and Hale & Aldworth (1910) found several nests on Sanday, where they described the species as having been present for two or three years at least; by 1920, it had become regular as a breeding species (Baxter & Rintoul 1922). Baxter & Rintoul (1953) described it as a regular breeder in fair numbers, and Balfour (1972) noted it as a scarce but annual nester. Since 1965, breeding has been reported annually, with pairs present on four islands in 1977, nesting taking place regularly on Mainland and Stronsay, and no fewer than nine pairs at one Mainland site in 1982 (Thom 1986; Meek in prep.). In 1991, 22-26 potential breeding pairs were located at 15 sites on seven islands. Details of numbers of known sites and successful pairs (table 3) suggest some stability over very recent years, although the species has probably increased as a breeder in Orkney this century (Meek in prep.).

Breeding was first proved in Shetland in 1905, when a brood was seen at Dunrossness (Berry 1939), but nesting has not been regular since.

In Caithness, a total of four pairs was present at three sites in 1977, and breeding was proved at four different sites between 1972 and 1982; three males and a female were at an inland loch in summer 1986 (RBBP). Berry (1939) considered a record from a loch in Sutherland in 1882

Table 3. Numbers of Northern Pintails
Anas acuta **breeding in Orkney, 1977-90**
Data from the RBBP

Year	No. sites	Pairs breeding successfully
1977	8	6+
1978	5	3-7
1979	4	1
1980	2	2
1981	3	6-7
1982	4	5-7
1983	6	9
1984	6	6
1985	4	3+
1986	3	6
1987	6	6+
1988	6	7+
1989	3+	1+
1990	3	8

'somewhat unsatisfactory', but recorded an adult seen with a juvenile in northwest Sutherland in 1936; more recently, the species bred in Sutherland in 1970 and 1980. In Inverness-shire, pairs summered in 1976, 1977 and 1984, and bred in 1983 and 1988. Sporadic breeding has also occurred in Morayshire since the early twentieth century.

Northern Pintails first bred in the Outer Hebrides in 1902, possibly as a result of introductions onto Harris at that time. Nesting occurred irregularly during the early part of the twentieth century (Berry 1939) and in 1946 and 1947, and during the 1970s a few summered on North Uist (Hopkins & Coxon 1979). More recently, the species probably bred in 1983; was present and probably bred at two sites, with one female fledging nine young, in 1984; and a pair attempted to breed in 1985.

Wales

This has been an irregular breeding species in Dyfed for several years, and has summered on odd occasions in Anglesey. A pair bred at Pontarsais, Carmarthen, in 1989, while three pairs attempted to nest on Skomer in 1989 and two in 1990 (*Welsh Bird Reports*).

Ireland

The Northern Pintail first bred in Ireland in 1917, and has since bred in six counties: Armagh, Antrim, Down, Laois, Londonderry and Roscommon. During 1968-72, single pairs were found at Lough Beg, Co. Londonderry and in Co. Roscommon (Shiarrock 1976), and the only published records since are of single pairs at Lough Croan, Co. Roscommon, in 1979 and 1983. Breeding was regular at Lough Neagh from about 1917 to 1938, but became sporadic after the 1930s (Hutchinson 1989).

The general picture in Britain

Table 4 lists the numbers of Northern Pintails breeding in Britain during 1977-90 as reported to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. These suggest a stabilisation, or even a modest increase, but such data are extremely hard to interpret, given the very low numbers nesting and the very few sites. It would appear that in 1989, the latest year for which full data are available at the time of writing, possibly 39 pairs bred in Britain, an estimated seven (18%) of which were on SSSIs or other protected sites. Much of the variation in numbers reported relates to variation in observer coverage. Even at well-watched localities, the chances of locating a secretive female and her brood, especially in dense emergent vegetation, can be small. Hence, it would seem that, despite large year-to-year changes in numbers of pairs breeding, there is at present no evidence for any long-term pattern in the population. Consequently, there is a very real need adequately to census the population, especially where there are important concentrations, as on the washlands of East Anglia and on the Scottish islands, which remain the strongholds of the species in Britain.

Of the 18 BTO nest record cards, eight include some description of the precise nest site, and three of these remark on the lack of concealment of the nest. Nests were associated with a clump of rushes (two), with grass tussocks (three), under mixed grass and heather *Calluna* (two), and one was an open nest in coarse grassland. All sites would appear to be in semi-natural vegetation, in some cases associated with clumps or tussocks, but the information available gives little real clue as to the species' exact nest-site requirements.

Table 4. Total numbers of breeding-season records of Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* in Britain in 1973-90 as reported to the RBBP

Year	No. localities	Pairs confirmed breeding	Pairs possibly breeding	Max. total (pairs)
1973	3	3	2	5
1974	7	10	1	11
1975	11	12	13	25
1976	10	6	10	16
1977	15	10	16	26
1978	10	7	16	23
1979	19	10	31	41
1980	15	9	16	25
1981	16	8	23	31
1982	18	7	25	32
1983	23	12	20	32
1984	15	5	13	18
1985	17	9	12	21
1986	14	6	12	18
1987	16	7	14	21
1988	20	14	15	29
1989	16	11	28	39
1990	20	9	27	36

Discussion

There is little doubt that the Northern Pintail colonised Britain late in the nineteenth century, and that in the early twentieth century it continued to consolidate its position. The liberation of feral birds undoubtedly contributed to its spread, especially in Scotland, and may explain the rather erratic pattern of colonisation and the lack of establishment at that time. In more recent years, however, the species has appeared more regular in its use of the most favoured areas, although still sporadic in its occurrence and successful breeding elsewhere.

In England, it regularly occurs in summer on the Fen washlands, the North Kent Marshes, the Suffolk coast and Lancashire/Cumbrian coasts, but nowhere in substantial numbers. In Scotland, its stronghold remains Orkney, with important concentrations also in Caithness, Inverness-shire and, especially, on Tiree. All these sites support relatively small breeding numbers, and not all enjoy statutory or other protection. Although the Ouse and Nene washlands hold important populations and are managed sympathetically, crucial water-level control is often not possible during the spring and summer. Abnormally high and low levels both have an adverse effect on the nesting ducks, and greater control over water levels (such as through impoundments within the washes) would enhance breeding success.

Batten *et al.* (1990) discussed various threats to the survival of the Northern Pintail as a breeder in the British Isles, but considered that the species' nomadic or opportunistic behaviour may well cause its extinction. Such a prognosis suggests that there are few conservation measures that could be taken to protect this vulnerable and small population.

The present analysis, however, demonstrates that many of the sites utilised by this rare breeding species are used regularly and that the populations at



83. Northern Pintails *Anas acuta*, Kent, February 1982 (R. J. Chandler)

each could be protected by a programme of site-safeguard. Although further research is needed to identify the precise ecological requirements of nesting Northern Pintails, it may also be possible to enhance the current breeding population through SSSI management agreements and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) prescriptions, which would potentially increase breeding success of the existing population and perhaps extend the current carrying capacity of the nesting habitat now used.

In Orkney, Meek (in prep.) has shown that all the sites holding breeding Northern Pintails in this vital area rely to a greater or lesser extent on current agricultural practices, and all would potentially be damaged by drainage. He showed that, of 15 sites in Orkney, only four were wholly or partially protected by formal conservation status. Four of the remaining 11 sites fell within areas subject to Environmental Management Payments under the Agricultural Development Programme for Scottish Islands, but this scheme ceases to operate in 1993 and payments which currently help to safeguard these elements of the population will disappear. At present, there appears to be no alternative source of such conservation support funding, although the future designation of the islands as an ESA may provide such a mechanism. Similarly, the suitable areas supporting breeding Northern Pintails on Tiree would fall within the jurisdiction of the proposed Inner Hebridean ESA.

In England and southwest Scotland, most sites are associated with 'fleet'-type habitats, or brackish waters very close to the sea. Shallow eutrophic to

brackish waters again seem favoured, and there seems little doubt that these conditions, together with nesting-habitat requirements, could be managed for if we had a better understanding of the species' precise ecological needs.

We still know very little about the true status and distribution of breeding Northern Pintails in Britain and Ireland. There is a real need to undertake autecological studies of this attractive duck if conservation organisations are to be able to safeguard its future through appropriate management.

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Summary

Analysis of available information relating to the breeding status of the Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* in Britain and Ireland suggests that, since 1973, the population has been relatively stable at between three and 14 confirmed cases of breeding annually out of a potential population of 20-40 pairs per annum. The major strongholds in Britain remain the East Anglian washlands, Orkney and the island of Tiree, Argyll, with regular summering occurring in a number of other areas. Only 18% of those Northern Pintails possibly breeding in 1989 were at Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and, even where this is the case (as at the Ouse and Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire), sympathetic management is precluded because of external constraints (water-level control at the washland sites). In Orkney, where the majority of the population breeds, only four of 15 regular sites enjoy formal protection, the remainder depending on the perpetuation of current agricultural practices; four other sites are currently maintained by Environmental Management Payments under the Agricultural Development Programme for Scottish Islands, which ceases in 1993. Greater research efforts are required to assess the extent of the British breeding population and its precise ecological needs, in order to develop improved management strategies for the adequate protection of such a rare breeding waterfowl species.

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Dr A. D. Fox, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT
E. R. Meek, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Smyril, Stenness, Stromness, Orkney

The 'British Birds' Best Annual Bird Report Award



This year, for the second of these annual awards, we looked at a total of 45 reports. The general standard was very high, and showed a noticeable and encouraging improvement over last year. We planned to discard, after an initial sort, those reports of lesser merit, to leave about half for more detailed consideration, but found ourselves unable to find any which at least one of us did not feel merited further consideration. We did, however, rule out five of the reports which fell down on one or other of two features which we felt were essential: the inclusion of scientific names, and the inclusion of every species seen in the recording area during the year.

We suggest that the model report should have an informative systematic list, should include all species (including escapes), together with their English and scientific names, a brief summary of their status in the county (so that the report can stand alone as an introduction to the birds of the area), and that the layout and typography should be clear and easy on the eye. We believe that contributors are encouraged by seeing their initials after noteworthy records, and that this makes the report more interesting for the reader. An introduction should ideally summarise the weather for the year as well as key bird events. Instructions to contributors should, at a minimum, list species for which descriptions are required. Graphs or tables are helpful for summarising wildfowl counts, wader passage and similar events. A map, too, is very useful, especially for readers unfamiliar with the county, and the whole can be enhanced by the inclusion of attractive and accurate artwork and good-quality photographs. In addition to the systematic list, many reports include interesting or informative papers on individual species or sites, on topics such as visible migration, or have write-ups of unusual species.

Following our initial sort, we scored each of the 40 remaining reports against 25 criteria, giving either a 1 or 0 for less critical features (such as whether or not escapes, or a contents list, were included) and a score of 0 to 2 or 0 to 3 for what we felt were the most important qualitative criteria (e.g. map, status summary, artwork, typeface and design). The most important feature of any report is, however, the systematic list; accordingly, the usefulness of this was scored independently on a scale of 0 to 3 by all three of us, then totalled, giving a possible 9 points for this feature. Scoring each report in this way introduced some objectivity to the judging process. The highest possible score for the 'perfect' report was 44.

The fact that a report was 'professionally' produced did not necessarily put it at an advantage over reports produced on a low budget. We did, however, look for a consistent approach and clear layout, and good artwork and photographs certainly enhance the general appearance. Drawings and



1



2=



2=

1st

BIRDS IN THE SHEFFIELD AREA 1991*Editors* **J. Hornbuckle and S. J. Roddis***Published by* **Sheffield Bird Study Group***Price* £2.50, from Tony Morris, Hon. Secretary, Sheffield Bird Study Group, 4A Raven Road, Nether Edge, Sheffield S7 1SB

2nd=

BIRDS IN CORNWALL 1991*Editor* S. M. Christophers *Assistant Editor* E. J. Cook*Published by* Cornwall Bird-watching and Preservation Society*Price* £5.00, from S. M. Christophers, Bramblings, Rachels Way, St Columb Major, Cornwall TR9 6EP

2nd=

THE ESSEX BIRD REPORT 1991*Editor* N. C. Green*Published by* The Essex Birdwatching Society*Price* £5.00 (+ 60p p&p), from J. Howard, Hon. Treasurer, 6 St Bride Court, Colchester, Essex CO1 4PQ

photographs may be either decorative or serve a documentary purpose, and in some cases combine the two functions.

As a result of the assessment process, three reports stood out above the rest: Cornwall, Essex and Sheffield. After further deliberation and careful checking of the objective assessments, Sheffield just got our vote for its highly informative systematic list, good design, some excellent line-drawings and an eye-catching wrap-around cover featuring Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus*. Sheffield's win shows that a smallish group (157 members) can produce a relatively cheap report (£2.50) of very high quality.

The Essex and Cornwall societies have memberships of 820 and 950 respectively; their publications, each double the size of the Sheffield report, both sell for £5.00. Thus, all three winners represent good value for money.

The Essex report was the most professionally produced, with some superb colour photographs and first-class black-and-white drawings—the best set in any report. It would just have won if a status summary had been provided for each species. Cornwall came second for the second successive year: a great achievement. Once again, there is much to praise in this report, including a striking Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* on the cover, but we considered that the design and typography were less well planned and less attractive than those of the other two top reports, and a more analytical approach could usefully have been adopted for some species.

Amongst the runners-up, we were particularly impressed by the quality of photographs and line-drawings in the Norfolk report, including a superb photographic cover of a male Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, while Avon and Dorset had especially attractive line-drawings on their front covers.

Kent, too, contained some excellent photographs and artwork. Indeed, Kent deserves congratulations for managing to produce two reports in one year, and thus becoming eligible for the judging this time. That it also came in the top ten was highly commendable.

We could continue to list a range of good features for almost every report submitted, for, as already noted, we found it almost impossible to reduce the pack to a shortlist. We went into considerable detail last year (*Brit. Birds* 85: 299-308), are very glad that our suggestions were clearly heeded by so many report editors, and urge new editors to read that write-up and also the useful article by Colin Whiteman in *The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1985* (pp. 18-22).

Table 1. Results

Position	County	Score (out of 44)	%
1	Sheffield	36	82
2=	Cornwall	35	80
2=	Essex	35	80
4	London	31	70
5	Avon	30	68
6=	Derbyshire	29	66
6=	Kent	29	66
6=	Wiltshire	29	66
9	Lothian	28½	65
10=	Cheshire	28	64
10=	Sussex	28	64
12=	Dorset	27½	63
12=	Hertfordshire	27½	63

In the final analysis (see table 1), the three top reports were separated by just one point. London, in fourth place, was four points behind the reports in joint second place, yet only 3½ points separated those placed fourth to twelfth, underlining the strength of the competition.

IAN DAWSON, ROBERT GILLMOR and J. T. R. SHARROCK
Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ



Do Mediterranean Shags occur in southwest England?

D. S. Flumm

In recent years, there have been several reports from southwest England of juvenile Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* resembling juveniles of the Mediterranean race *desmarestii*. This paper summarises the British reports to date and discusses the problems of separating juveniles of the nominate race *aristotelis* from those of the race *desmarestii* in the field.

As the post-juvenile moult of the Shag commences in September, is arrested during winter, and takes over a year to be completed, the word 'juvenile' is used throughout to describe all Shags up to the autumn of their second calendar-year.

Reported sightings in Britain

On 19th February 1986, while looking through a flock of Shags and Great Cormorants *P. carbo* at the Fal Estuary, Cornwall, I was struck by the appearance of one very distinctive individual (fig. 1). Although clearly a 'Shag-type', it showed gleaming white underparts and large creamy-white upperwing-covert patches. Furthermore, it had a largely yellow bill and bright pink-orange legs and feet. At the time, this combination of characters led me to believe that it was of a different species, so I was somewhat disappointed when an on-the-spot reference to Harrison (1983) failed to confirm this.

On 6th August 1985, I had seen a similar bird with an adult Shag flying west off St Ives, Cornwall, and my notebook sketch of that individual also depicts gleaming white underparts and large white upperwing-covert patches.

There are two races of Shag in addition to nominate *aristotelis*: *riggenbachi* (which is outside the scope of this paper) on the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa, and *desmarestii* (adults of which are similarly not discussed here) in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. Juveniles of both show gleaming white underparts and pale upperwing patches, as on the two Cornish individuals. There is no clinal variation in Shags, the three races being allopatric.

In view of the fact that Mediterranean Shearwaters *Puffinus yelkouan* are regularly seen in British waters, and the fact that a Shag ringed in Wales was recovered in the Mediterranean, at Valencia, Spain, it seemed not unreasonable that the race *desmarestii* might possibly occur in Britain. I tentatively submitted

the Fal Estuary record to the British Birds Rarities Committee†, and the following description is summarised from my notebook (see also fig. 1):

Plumage as accompanying juvenile Shags, except for: white underparts; pale upperwing-coverts; yellow bill with black culmen; bright pink-orange legs and feet. Throat, breast and belly clear white, but flanks washed with grey, and grey smudges at sides of lower neck, reminiscent of those of Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* in winter plumage. Forehead, lores, crown, ear-coverts, nape and mantle dark

brown as on juvenile nominate *aristotelis*, but most of upperwing-coverts creamy-white. Bill largely yellow, much more so than those of other Shags present, and with dark culmen ridge and tip. Legs and feet very different from those of nearby Shags and Great Cormorants, being conspicuous pink-orange rather than dark brown or black.

At least five observers have been involved in reporting a total of seven sightings of these striking juvenile Shags in Britain. The reports, each of a single individual, are listed below (those which were submitted to the BBRC are marked with an asterisk):

Flying west off St Ives, Cornwall, on 6th August 1985.

St Anthony Head, Fal Estuary, Cornwall, on 19th February 1986 (fig. 1).*

Flying west off St Ives on 8th October 1987 (fig. 2).*

Mevagissey, Cornwall, on 12th January 1988.*

Thurleston, Devon, on 22nd-23rd February 1988.*

Flying west off St Ives on 21st August 1988.

Gwennap Head, Cornwall, on 30th September 1988.*

Not all of those reports submitted to the BBRC were firm claims of *desmarestii*, and none of the five was accepted as such.

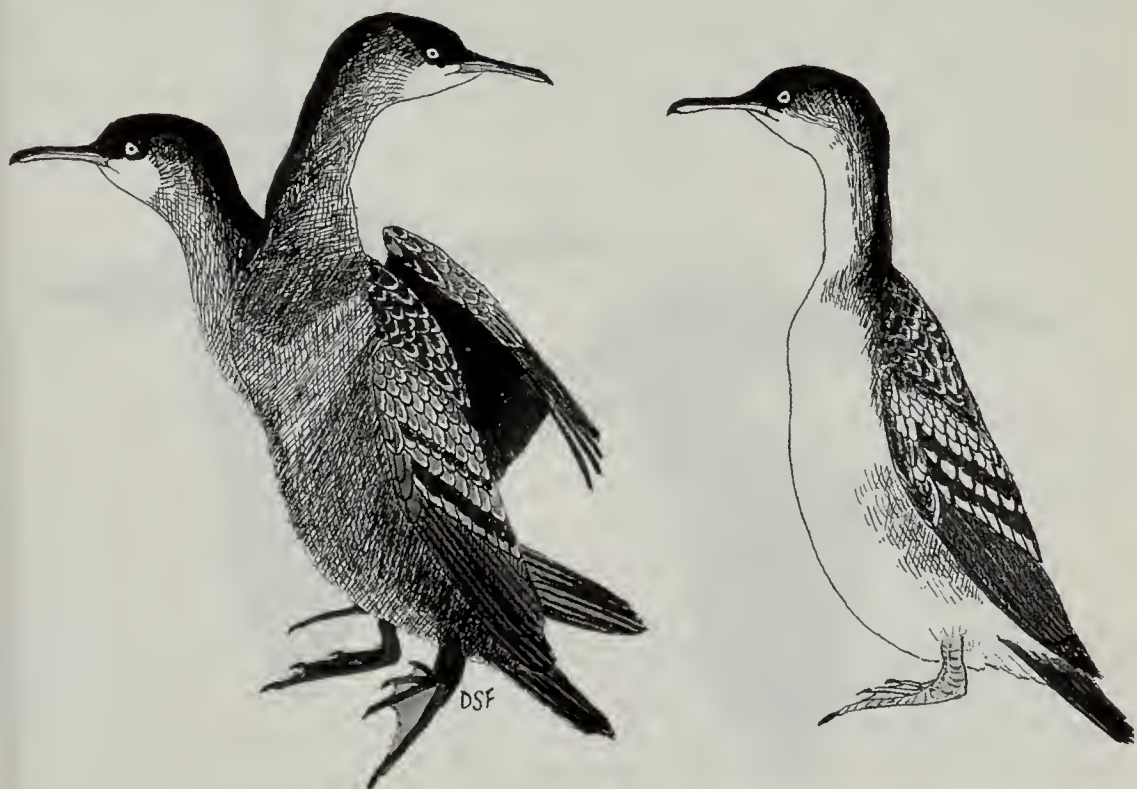


Fig. 1. Juvenile (second-calendar-year) Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* with plumage resembling that of Mediterranean race *desmarestii* (right), with two typical juveniles (second-calendar-year) of nominate race, Fal Estuary, Cornwall, 19th February 1986 (D. S. Flumm, from Flumm 1986)

Comparison between juveniles of the races *aristotelis* and *desmarestii*

From 26th April to 3rd May 1991, during a visit to Mallorca, I had the opportunity to observe several juvenile Shags of the race *desmarestii*. Notebook sketches made at the time (redrawn as fig. 3) show the similarity between juveniles of this race and those seen in southwest England and listed above.

Underparts

On average, juvenile *desmarestii* is much paler (many are white) on the underparts than nominate *aristotelis*, but there is much variation in both races (Alström 1985; personal observations). In Mallorca, some juvenile *desmarestii* had a brownish wash to the underparts while others were gleaming white. Of the few seen standing out of the water, all had dark thighs which contrasted with the pale underparts (see fig. 3). While this may be a constant feature on *desmarestii*, juveniles of the nominate race can also be very pale below; indeed, there is one skin of a nominate juvenile at the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, which has white underparts and sharply contrasting dark thighs (Peter Lansdown *in litt.*). Juveniles of the nominate race have dark thighs, but the contrast of these with the underparts is dependent on the degree of paleness of the flanks, belly and vent.

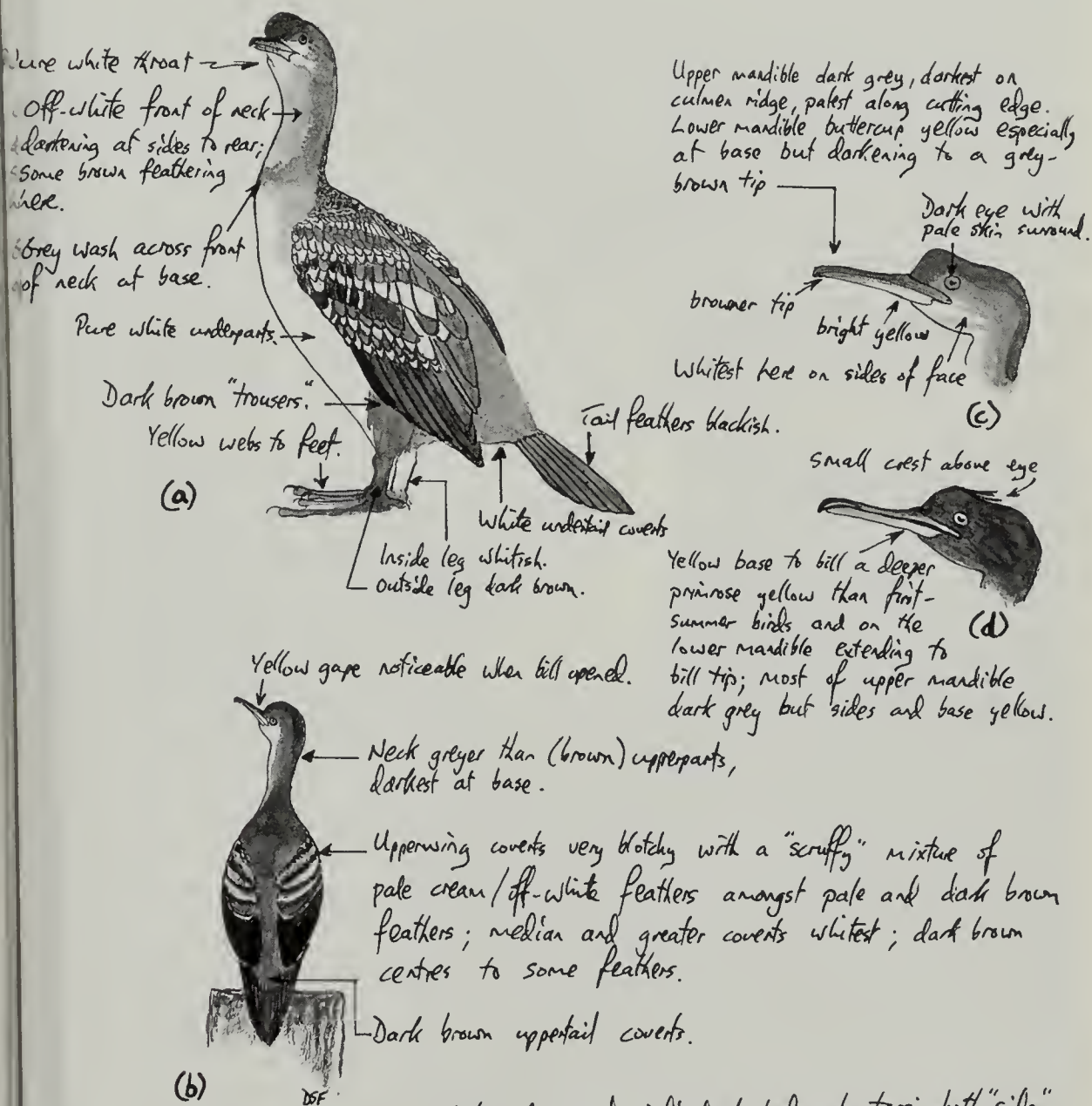
Upperparts

Typically, juvenile Shags of the nominate race have the upperwing-coverts much paler than, and thus contrasting with, the remainder of the upperparts. The degree of paleness is very variable, however, as wearing and bleaching of the feathers cause these coverts to become progressively paler. Some of the juveniles among the hundreds of Shags which form rafts in autumn in the Isles of Scilly, Cornwall, have extremely pale upperwing-covert patches, while



Fig. 2. Juvenile (first- or second-calendar-year) Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* with plumage resembling that of Mediterranean race *desmarestii* (left), with typical juvenile (first- or second-calendar-year) of nominate race, St Ives, Cornwall, 8th October 1987 (D. S. Flamm)

others show barely any contrast (personal observations). The upperparts pattern of the well-marked individuals closely matches that of juvenile *desmarestii*. On average, however, *desmarestii* has even paler, sometimes white, upperwing-covert panels (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Alström 1985; personal observations).



Note: A second individual had pale tarsi both "sides", the same colour as the feet. Latter, a pale grey-flesh showed slightly brighter fleshy webs and pale (off-white) toes. This second immature lacked the "great Northern" patch across the base of neck but still showed flanks as the above individual, otherwise it was wholly white underneath. Other immatures had a browner wash to the underparts. Some showed more extensively white upperwing coverts than above bird.

Fig. 3. Juvenile (second-calendar-year) (a-c) and adult (d) Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* of Mediterranean race *desmarestii*, Porto Colom, Mallorca, 1st May 1991 (D. S. Flumm)



34. Juvenile Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* of race *desmarestii*, Spain, summer 1985 (Jorge Muntaner)



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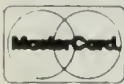
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Nevertheless, a juvenile Shag with very pale (even white) upperwing-covert patches could still be an individual of the nominate race in worn and bleached plumage; in flight, such individuals look quite different from 'normal' birds (the one that flew west at St Ives on 8th December 1987, fig. 2, was not identified even as a Shag by some of the observers present).

Bill

Cramp & Simmons (1977) stated, for juvenile to second-summer Shags of the nominate race, 'Bill pale pink-brown, culmen black' and, for the race *desmarestii* (no age distinctions given) 'bill usually yellow except black culmen and tip'; while others, for example Alström (1985), have described young nominate *aristotelis* with bills 'dingy yellowish on the lower mandible and along the cutting-edge of the upper mandible, contrasting with blackish culmen'. The Fal Estuary individual's largely yellow bill with black culmen and tip is, therefore, not inconsistent with the bills of some nominate *aristotelis*.

It may be that the intensity of yellow on the bill, at least along the lower mandible, is a feature of juvenile *desmarestii*. With the exception of the Fal Estuary individual, I have yet to see a juvenile of the nominate race with a bill as bright yellow as those of Mallorcan individuals (fig. 3). My observations in Cornwall have shown young Shags to have grey or pink lower mandibles, with any yellow, if present at all, usually restricted to the base of the mandible.

Legs and feet

According to Cramp & Simmons (1977), typical juvenile nominate Shags have 'Foot like adult, but webs and innerside of tarsus pale flesh-brown to yellow-brown.' These darken with age, and the feet of second-summer individuals are described as 'dark brown'. Alström (1985) described the legs and feet of adult nominate Shags as 'blackish', while juveniles 'have blackish tarsi with paler, pinkish to brownish-yellowish, innersides; the webs and usually, in part, the toes too have the same coloration'.

As Cramp & Simmons (1977) described adult *desmarestii* as having the feet 'brown with yellow webs' and Géroutet (1965) commented that 'their yellowish feet are often quite conspicuous at every age', it would seem that a Shag in at least its third calendar-year with bright yellow feet is likely to be of this race. One of the most striking features of the Fal Estuary individual was its bright pink-orange legs and feet in comparison with ten other juvenile Shags alongside, all of which had dark brown legs and feet.

It is, however, evident that there is much greater variation in the leg and foot coloration of nominate *aristotelis*, particularly juveniles, than is generally realised. On 7th December 1952, at St Ives, N. R. Phillips observed a young Shag with 'pinky-orange legs and feet' (*Birds in Cornwall Ann. Rep.* 1952), and in the following year's report the same observer recorded: 'On further checking the leg colour of this species I have found that, in the autumn particularly, considerable numbers of them show a definite tendency to a yellowish hue, this being most noticeable on the webs of the feet . . . juveniles seem to show this more than adults.'

Three years later, N. R. Phillips wrote that on 10th September 'a pale bird

at St. Ives had bright, mustard-yellow legs', and, on 28th September, 'at St. Ives, two birds with yellow legs: five with flesh-pink legs, one of which was an adult' (*Birds in Cornwall Ann. Rep.* 1956).

Structure

On average, the race *desmarestii* is smaller than nominate *aristotelis*, but, as size differences exist between the sexes, there is sufficient overlap between the races to make this feature of dubious value in the field: for example, an average-sized male *desuarestii* has the same wing length as an average-sized female of the nominate race (table 1).

Table 1. Wing and bill measurements (in mm) of Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* of the races *aristotelis* and *desmarestii*

	<i>aristotelis</i>		<i>desmarestii</i>
	SW England	N Scotland	
Wing length ♂	271 (261-278)		258 (243-271)
♀	258 (251-269)		249 (240-265)
Bill length ♂	55.7 (53-58)	58.9 (56-61)	60.9 (58-65)
♀	56.2 (55-58)	59.3 (57-63)	63.2 (61-65)
Bill depth ♂	10.5 (10.2-11)	11.6 (10.4-12.1)	10.0 (9.7-10.6)
♀	9.2 (8.3-10.4)	9.9 (9.1-12.1)	8.7 (8.2- 9.3)

The bill of *desuarestii* is longer and slimmer than that of the nominate race (Cramp & Simmons 1977) (table 1), and this should be discernible in the field if the two races are observed side by side. Only one of the British sightings listed above mentioned a difference in bill structure, with the individual in question having a bill that appeared longer than that of other Shags.

Table 2. Summary of main differences between juvenile Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* of the races *aristotelis* and *desmarestii*

	<i>aristotelis</i>	<i>desmarestii</i>
Underparts	Typically, uniform brown, paler on belly and vent, but some are much paler and have contrasting dark thigh patches	Typically, white with contrasting dark thigh patches
Upperwing-coverts	Pale brown to cream panel, fading with wear and bleaching, variable	Whitish, sometimes white, panel, distinct on most individuals, but variable
Bill	Shorter and deeper in SW England populations. Lower mandible pale pink-brown, dingy yellowish, pink or grey	Longer and, on average, more slender. Lower mandible often bright yellow
Legs	Usually blackish on outer sides with paler pink, brown or yellowish inner sides; some are much paler, from mustard-yellow to pinky-orange	Dark brown on outer sides, pinkish to brownish-yellow on inner sides; some are uniformly pale, or with dull yellow on front and darker on rear tarsi
Feet	Blackish, or with webs pale flesh-brown to yellow-brown, darkening with age	Brown, with paler yellow webs
Wing length	Averages longer	Averages shorter

Conclusions

The main differences between juvenile Shags of the nominate race and juveniles of the race *desmarestii* are summarised in table 2. Given that those of the nominate race can exhibit extreme plumage variation in terms of paleness and pattern of the underparts and paleness of the upperwing-coverts, however, it would be unwise to claim a record of juvenile *desmarestii* in Britain and Ireland on plumage alone. Nevertheless, a combination of dark thighs contrasting with very white underparts (from throat to vent) and strikingly pale panels on the upperwing-coverts would suggest *desmarestii* and encourage observers to take a second look.

Bare-parts coloration is extremely variable on nominate juveniles, and individuals with pale (yellow, orange or flesh-coloured) legs and feet do occur.

The single most reliable character for separating juveniles of the two races is the bill. This is longer and, on average, slimmer on *desmarestii*, which also has a brighter yellow lower mandible. This feature, however, should not be used alone, but in combination with underpart, upperwing-covert and leg-and-foot characters.

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the help and advice given by P. G. Lansdown throughout the preparation of this paper, and particularly for his comments and improvements on the first draft and for providing information on the British reports of suspected individuals of the race *desmarestii*.

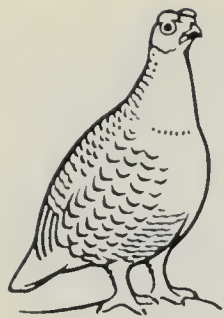
Summary

There have been several reports of unusually pale juvenile Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* resembling the Mediterranean race *desmarestii* in Cornwall and Devon, and the similarities and differences between juveniles of this race and those of the nominate race are discussed. Juvenile Shags of the nominate race are more variable in plumage and bare-part colours than is generally realised, and there are currently no grounds for believing that *desmarestii* has occurred in Britain and Ireland.

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D. S. Flumm, Lyonesse Guest House, Land's End, Seauen, Cornwall TR19 7AD



Mystery photographs

187 When I first saw this photograph (plate 31, repeated here), it was at a distance, so all I could see was what looked like a silhouette of a raptor, which could be an *Accipiter*. It has pretty good wing shape for a large female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *A. nisus*, but the fanned tail is odd. Sparrowhawks usually circle-soar, which is what this bird appears to be doing, with a more-or-less closed tail (except when displaying, when both tail and undertail-coverts are fanned). Is the size right? Could it be a Northern Goshawk *A. gentilis*? A closer look at the photograph reveals bold barring on the underwing and tail, which rules out an *Accipiter*, as all species have much finer barring there.



It is very difficult to judge the size of this bird from the photograph, but it is clearly a relatively broad-winged, long-tailed hawk of some kind (other than an *Accipiter*). The proportions and bold patterning below quickly lead one in the direction of a harrier *Circus*, since other hawks, except perhaps Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, have proportionately shorter tails relative to wing width. Even for that species, the wings would look longer, and the patterning on the underparts is quite wrong, for, regardless of colour phase, the carpal patch would be dark. Although it is not obvious in the photograph, this bird's wings appear to be held slightly up above the back, in a shallow V - a characteristic of all harriers in gliding or soaring flight. Fortunately, I can forget Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*: this is the most solid-looking of the harriers, more like a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, with distinctive dark, unbarred underparts on the female, and bold, grey-and-black primaries pattern on the male. It must, therefore, be a 'ring-tail' Hen *C. cyaneus*, Montagu's *C. pygargus* or, perhaps,

Pallid *C. macrourus*, since males of these three are also boldly patterned grey and black, and immature males would show a more confusing mixture of juvenile and adult plumage. Juveniles look superficially like females.

So, how am I going to narrow down to one species? A closer look at the proportions and structure should help. Both of the smaller species, Montagu's and Pallid, would appear thinner-winged and longer-tailed, with a longer, more pointed appearance to the primaries, or 'hand', than this bird. The final

clinch is to count the fingered primaries: it has four (excluding the short outer primary), which makes it a Hen, whereas the other two species usually reveal only three. (But beware: moulting birds will be difficult to assess on this point.) It is easy, of course, to count the primaries in a still photograph; less easy, but not impossible, to do so on the moving bird. But the effect of the extra fingered primary is to give a more rounded, blunter 'hand', an almost *Accipiter*-like appearance when viewed from below: the point which misled me at the start. Lastly, I can be pretty sure that this is an adult female, rather than a juvenile, because of a lack of contrast between the pale areas of the primaries and secondaries. The latter are usually 'greyer', making them look darker than the primaries. Ian Carter photographed this female Hen Harrier on Texel, in the Netherlands, in May 1992.

ROBIN PRYTHERCH

23 Caledonia Place, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4DL



36 & 37. Mystery photographs 188. Identify the species. Answer next month





From the Rarities Committee's files

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Separation of South Polar Skua from Great Skua Some of the claims of South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccornicki* that have been submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee contain certain misconceptions. These relate to both South Polar Skua and Great Skua *S. skua* and concern size, bill structure, pale nape and prominence of white wing-flashes.

One widely held belief is that South Polar Skua is smaller than Great Skua, but this is a gross over-simplification. Devillers (1977) gave wing-lengths as 373-412 mm (average 394) for South Polar Skua and 376-425 (average 402) for Great Skua. Clearly, therefore, some South Polar Skuas would appear larger than some Great Skuas. Both species vary in size among ages and between sexes. *BLIP* (vol. 3) gives wing-lengths for Great Skua as 382-414 mm for adult males, 398-428 for adult females, 367-400 for juvenile males, and 381-423 for juvenile females. Some skuas seen during seawatches in Britain and thought to have been dark-morph South Polar Skuas were picked out initially by their smaller size in comparison with an accompanying Great Skua. Bearing in mind the infrequency with which mixed groups of skuas are seen and the size variation among Great Skuas, particularly between adult females and juvenile males, the parent-offspring association should be given more consideration.

It is alleged that the bill of South Polar Skua is slightly shorter and more slender than that of Great Skua. Devillers (1977) gave the length of the culmen as 42.6-49.6 mm (average 46.6) for South Polar Skua and 45.4-50.8 (average 47.9) for Great Skua. Even considering average measurements, this is a very marginal character. Furthermore, with the bill of juvenile Great Skua in its first few months being up to 3 mm shorter than its adult length, a juvenile Great Skua can have a bill as short as that of the shortest-billed non-juvenile South Polar Skua. The ratio of culmen length to the height of the bill at the posterior end of the nostril (bill ratio) was given by Devillers (1977) as 2.38-3.10 (average 2.75) for South Polar Skua and 2.52-3.00 (average 2.74) for Great Skua. Bill shape is thus virtually identical in the two species.

At one time, it was considered that a pale nape was strongly indicative of South Polar Skua. This is not so. On individuals of both species, the paleness of the nape should be taken in the context of the general plumage tone, and not as an isolated feature. The nape of Great Skua, particularly that of an adult, often contains a concentration of fine, golden streaks of variable intensity which can give it a generally pale, usually yellow-buff, appearance at a distance. Usually, the paler an adult Great Skua is on the nape, the paler-marked it will be elsewhere, and such a pale individual should not be mistaken for a South Polar Skua. Quite often, the lightest areas of a juvenile

Great Skua are the nape and upper mantle. The contrast afforded by the very dark head results in a subtle collar effect, and thus creates a South Polar Skua pitfall. On some juvenile Great Skuas, the nape may even be tinged ochre or mustard-coloured. On such individuals, rufous-toned underparts, fresh, pale scalloping on the scapulars and wing-coverts, and a wholly dark head would allow identification as Great Skua.

It has been stated that juvenile South Polar Skua has a smaller area of white on the bases of the primaries, both above and below, than does juvenile Great Skua. Whilst this may be true on average, it is not supported by any comparative measurements. On a single bird, the feature has no value whatsoever, as some juvenile Great Skuas show barely any white on the upperwing and very limited white on the bases of the primaries on the underwing.

In summary, size, bill structure and prominence of white wing-flashes are of absolutely no assistance in the identification process, and a pale nape is of use only in the case of a critically examined and otherwise basically uniform, cold-toned individual.

Acknowledgment I wish to thank Dave Flumm for his thorough commenting upon both published material and my own research on large skuas, and for his detailed and enthusiastic correspondence on the subject over many months.

PETER LANSDOWN

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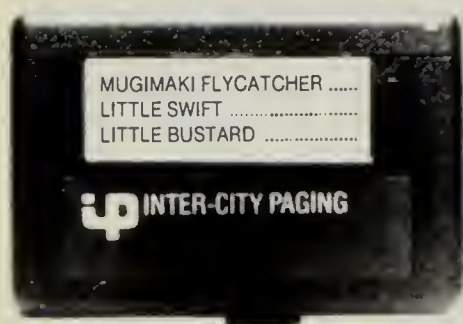
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pager was not able to receive messages (but this had been overcome by October), and other areas with poor, or no, reception were western (and some central) parts of northern Scotland. Based in Bedfordshire, I was also on the overlap of two signal areas, so that some duplication of message occurred, with one of them often garbled. This mild irritation was solved by using the 'delete' button.

So how does the pager compare with the telephonic news services? At first sight, the cost of the pager of around £1 a day seems expensive, but at least your outlay is known from the start, and it cuts out the risk of unexpectedly high telephone bills hitting the doormat. Anyone who regularly calls the telephone news system from payphones or, worse still, from mobile or car phones knows how expensive these are. The main, obvious advantage of pagers, however, is that you get to know as soon as the information is broadcast.

During the early winter period of the trial, when there was not much news about, £1 a day seemed a lot just to hear about long-staying Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* and Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis*. On average, ten calls per weekday were received, with about 15 calls per day at weekends. During the second half of the trial, however, things were busier, and the 40-message storage capacity was regularly hit in a single day. Compared with the telephone-line services, the news was always up to date and was sometimes ahead, but the various services presumably feed off each other in any case. I found all the information, directions and so on that I followed to be reliable.

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The grebe in backview (plate 8) was named as:

Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	(39%)
Slavonian Grebe <i>P. auritus</i>	(36%)
Black-necked Grebe <i>P. nigricollis</i>	(25%)

It was a Slavonian Grebe, photographed in Lancashire in March 1990 by Steve Young.

Of the leading three runners, two selected Red-necked Grebe and one plumped for Slavonian. We do, therefore, at long last have an outright winner of this fifth 'Monthly marathon'. The name of the winner of the SUNBIRD holiday to Africa, Asia or North America will be revealed next month.

New 'Marathon', new rules

The new rules (see page 149 in March issue) start now, with the new 'Marathon'. The photographs published in February (plate 18) and March (plate 32) are included in this sixth 'Monthly marathon', but, to make it absolutely fair for everyone, the closing dates for those are extended to 15th May 1993. *You should, therefore, send in your entries for plates 18, 32 and 38 all on one postcard NOW (even if you have already sent in the two earlier answers separately).*



38. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149). Identify the species. Send in your entries for this (and also for plate 18 in February and plate 32 in March) all on one postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th May 1993



Notes

Merlin stalking Dunlins on foot On 7th November 1988, on the northern coast of the Eiderstedt peninsula, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, a Merlin *Falco columbarius* attracted my attention. It left its perch on a wooden post, flew a short distance and landed on the short, sheep-grazed grass of the saltmarsh. After standing erect for a few moments, apparently searching, it then proceeded to walk, like a parrot (Psittacidae), across the marsh, hopping over intervening ditches. It moved approximately 30 m in this fashion, towards a small flock of roosting Dunlins *Calidris alpina* about 60 m distant, before taking to the air. It was thus able to surprise and catch one of the waders. This behaviour is not mentioned for the Merlin in *BWP* (vol. 2), although running is given as a hunting technique for the insectivorous Red-footed Falcon *F. vesperinus* and for other species (Saker Falcon *F. cherrug*, Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni*) when feeding on insects; the Lanner Falcon *F. biarmicus* is also mentioned as 'exceptionally' hunting on foot.

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Young Moorhen repeatedly carrying food from adult to younger chicks On 6th August 1990, at Orrell Water Park, Wigan, Greater Manchester, I watched an adult Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* collecting loose floating anglers' bait from the surface of a lake and then pass the food item to an almost full-grown young. The latter then swam about 3 m to the shore of an island and fed the food to one of three younger Moorhen chicks, approximately seven days old, which were waiting there; the older chick then swam back to the adult to receive another food item, which it again took back to feed to the younger chicks. I watched the juvenile make several successive round trips, carrying food from the foraging adult to the younger chicks and then swimming back, before I ceased my observations. It is well known that young Moorhens of earlier broods may help to feed later broods, but the repeated transferring of food items is of particular interest.

PETER J. ALKER

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Moorhen feeding from, and in association with, a hedgehog On the evening of 17th June 1990, beside a small farm pond in Holkham Park, Norfolk, I noticed an adult Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* following a hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*. On closer inspection, it became obvious that the bird was picking small insects from between the spines on the mammal's back. It followed the hedgehog for about 30 m, continually placing its bill among the spines. On one occasion, the Moorhen even jumped on to the mammal's

back, where it remained for a split second, perched most precariously. As well as taking insects directly from the hedgehog's back, the Moorhen also fed on those disturbed from the grass by the mammal. I have never before seen any bird exploiting a hedgehog as a means of feeding. ANDREW BLOOMFIELD

Tower House, Longlands, Holkham Park, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1RT

It seems probable that the 'insects' were in fact ticks (Acarina) or the hedgehog flea *Archaeopsylla erinacei*, with which hedgehogs are frequently infested. EDS

Apparent egg-dumping by Common Gulls In 1987, a total of 69 pairs of Common Gulls *Larus canus* was present on North Ronaldsay, Orkney (*Scot. Birds* 15: 83-89). Nests were located in 43 territories, and in three cases additional eggs were found in nests long after incubation had commenced.

Nest A Single egg found on 7th May, and complete clutch of three eggs from 13th; on 27th May, four eggs were in the scrape, one fresh and broken, and on 2nd June four unbroken eggs, the newest very distinctively marked. On 7th June, two eggs had hatched and the chicks had left the nest; one of the other eggs contained a dead chick, while the distinctive egg remained unbroken (these eggs were still in the nest on 11th June).

Nest B Two eggs on four visits between 16th and 27th May, but on 9th June, when one egg was chipping, there were three similarly marked eggs in the nest.

Nest C Clutch of three eggs found on 30th May, but on 8th June two newly hatched chicks along with three eggs, while on 16th June two cold eggs and a dead chick were present.

In addition, a further nest near nest *A* on 27th May contained three eggs, with a further two cold eggs just outside the scrape. The other three nests were widely dispersed over the island, suggesting that more than one individual was dumping eggs.

Egg-dumping by gulls appears not to have been recorded previously, although there are other instances of Common Gull nests containing eggs laid by more than one female. Two females shared the same mate and nest on Fair Isle, Shetland, for a number of years (N. Riddiford in prep.), while in 1977, on Handa, Highland, M. Trubridge recorded a female presumably rolling eggs from an adjacent nest into its own (*Brit. Birds* 73: 222-223).

The advantages of egg-dumping to the laying female are obvious, although in the three North Ronaldsay nests the eggs were laid far too late for successful incubation. There is, however, a possible advantage to the cuckolded nest. Work by N. Verbeek on Glaucous-winged Gulls *L. glaucescens* in Canada has shown that the last egg laid in a complete clutch (which is the egg least likely to produce a fledged young) is the most likely to be preyed on (*Ibis* 130: 512-518): it is usually smaller and distinctively marked, and therefore the most obvious to an avian predator with limited time at the nest. As an egg laid by a different female will probably differ in appearance from the other eggs in a nest, it is therefore the most likely to be preyed on, at no cost to the incubating birds.

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Predatory behaviour of Kittiwakes On 10th June 1990, on the Ythan estuary, Grampian, most of the local Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* chicks had apparently hatched and were congregated in large crèches. On two occasions, I saw small groups of Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* hanging around the

chicks, and then dashing in, snatching one from near the edge and stabbing it to death; they were also feeding on any corpses lying around, including those of adult eiders. Once they had a kill, the Kittiwakes became very aggressive and attempted to keep it for themselves, more in the manner of larger, more aggressive gulls. A little later, on a rising tide, many more Kittiwakes came into the estuary. Some started chasing the Sandwich *Sterna sandvicensis* and Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea*, behaving more like agile skuas *Stercorarius*, and on four occasions I saw a Kittiwake grab the wing or tail of a tern, but only once did pursuit result in the tern dropping its fish.

HOWARD VAUGHAN

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Feral Rock Doves attempting to land on sea At about 12.00 GMT on 1st January 1990, at Holland Haven on the north Essex coast, my attention was caught by two fairly large whitish birds fluttering near the surface of the sea. Expecting them to be gulls (Laridae), I raised my binoculars and was surprised to see that they were feral Rock Doves *Columba livia*. They were approximately 100-150 m from the shore, and were fluttering very close to the water, feet dangling, as if trying to land on the surface; after about 15 seconds, they flew out to sea, then circled back over my head and followed the coast northwards. I have read before of feral Rock Doves trying to land on flat expanses of fresh water, and the explanation is often given that they mistake the water for a solid surface. On this occasion, however, the sea was fairly rough, whipped up by a moderate southeasterly wind, with waves of perhaps 70 cm or more. It seems unlikely that the pigeons could have mistaken the sea for a land surface, so was this behaviour a genuine attempt to land on the sea? Another explanation must be that they were attempting to catch a food item.

CLIVE A. MAXWELL

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Dr J. J. M. Flegg has commented: 'I have seen this in the English Channel and the North Sea on three separate ferry crossings, involving whole flocks of racing pigeons. They do land on the water and take off again successfully and repeatedly, often after intervals well in excess of one minute.' EDS

Aggressive display by Long-eared Owl towards Common Buzzard At 04.45 GMT on 10th April 1989, at a gorge near La Rambla, north Tenerife, Canary Islands, we watched a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* very persistently chasing an adult Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* for about two minutes. It was dark, but nearby street lighting and a powerful torch allowed good views. Both birds flew over an area of approximately 200 m², the owl trying to displace the buzzard, which seemed quite easily to avoid the constant attacks. A cliff in the area held a Common Buzzard's nest with two chicks, and in the same cliff, perhaps less than 100 m from the raptors' nest, a pair of Long-eared Owls bred. The latter's aggressive display probably involved territorial defence. Although it is likely that the owl's intimidatory flight motivated the buzzard to abandon its perch, this could also have been provoked by our presence near the nest.

We should like to thank Keith Emmerson for his help.

FELIPE SIVERIO and PEDRO F. ACOSTA

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Sand Martin catching fish On 15th June 1990, on the River Lune near Tebay, Cumbria, I was watching a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* flying low over the water when, to my astonishment, it plunged into the water and caught a small fish. The martin immediately 'towered' up into the air and then dropped the fish, only to catch it again in mid-air; it then dropped and re-caught the fish once more. The Sand Martin was then chased briefly by a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, before flying downriver; unfortunately, I lost sight of it and was unable to see what it did with the fish.

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House Martins taking over Barn Swallows' nest An editorial comment to D. R. Coan's note on Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* destroying nests of House Martins *Delichon urbica* invited the submission of similar records (*Brit. Birds* 83: 24). Perversely, I respond with an account of a pair of Barn Swallows *not* interfering with the nest-building activities of a pair of House Martins in circumstances which seem much more provocative than those described by Mr Coan.

In July 1987, at Gullane, East Lothian, a pair of Barn Swallows built a substantial nest on a telephone junction box about 20 cm below the eaves on the outside wall of my house, rearing one brood. On 17th September, just before they finally disappeared, a swallow was seen to chase off an inquisitive House Martin. In 1988, a pair of Barn Swallows reappeared at this nest on 1st May, but by 14th it was apparent that they were facing competition from a pair of House Martins. The martins quickly gained the upper hand (probably because they visited the nest together and spent much time there, while the swallows visited singly and spent more time perched on the gutter above), and in the following week they built the nest up to the overhanging eaves. By the end of the week, the swallows, which I never saw attempt to interfere with this work, had left the scene, and the martins hatched out one brood, which apparently fledged successfully. In 1989, no Barn Swallows appeared in the vicinity of the nest, but it was again occupied by House Martins, which raised two broods.

Few Barn Swallows' nests are built in situations which invite exploitation by House Martins. The only similar case that I can find in the British literature (*Brit. Birds* 71: 39) also concerns a nest against an outside wall which was taken over by House Martins when building was nearly complete. No mention is made of the Barn Swallows' reactions to being dispossessed. *BNP* (vol. 5: pages 270 & 293) records two, apparently different, cases of House Martins taking over Barn Swallows' nests. In one of these, the swallows' unsuccessful defence lasted three days.

Individual Barn Swallows vary enormously in their aggressiveness. One of those which have nested in our garage over the past 20 years could be confidently identified by the persistence with which it used to mob our dog anywhere within 450 m of the nest. Maybe such extreme individual aggressiveness was responsible for the events recorded by Mr Coan. This, however, would not explain the curious record (*Brit. Birds* 54: 362) of eight Barn Swallows attacking the nest holes at a colony of Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*.

There have also been records of Barn Swallows successfully competing for nest sites with House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* and Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* (*Brit. Birds* 25: 131, 171).

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Identification of Black Wheatear in flight Male Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*, when seen at some distance, may be quite difficult to separate from younger, black-crowned White-crowned Black Wheatear *O. leucopyga*, even in flight. The tail pattern of some first-year White-crowned Blacks can approach that of Black, and this can cause problems, especially in unfavourable viewing conditions. A useful character is the fact that, in flight, Black Wheatear shows a slightly paler 'panel' along the bases of the inner primaries and outer secondaries: this panel is inconspicuous and nowhere near so obvious as that shown by some races of Mourning Wheatear *O. lugens*; it rather recalls the effect given by Blackbird *Turdus merula* in flight, not clear, but still noticeably paler than the wing-coverts. Nothing of this feature is revealed on a resting Black Wheatear, as the paler coloration is restricted to the inner webs of the feathers involved, the outer webs being as dark as the wing-coverts. This character applies to both races of Black Wheatear, nominate *leucura* of Iberia as well as *senilica* of North Africa; it is most useful in North Africa, where Black overlaps in range with White-crowned Black (though its mountain and cliff habitat differs somewhat from the latter's desert habitat), but could be useful on any vagrant. There is some variation in the distinctiveness of this pattern on females, but their brownish plumage makes them reasonably easy to identify in any case.

The pale wing-panel of Black Wheatear was not mentioned by Peter Clements in his paper on wheatear identification (*Brit. Birds* 80: 137-157, 187-238); nor in *BIWP* (vol. 5), where the flight illustrations in plates 64 and 65 are inaccurate (as, in fact, is the flight picture of Blackbird).

I wish to thank Nils Otto Preuss for access to skins in the Zoological Museum of Copenhagen.

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Feeding habits of Dartford Warbler On 7th January 1990, at Greatstone-on-Sea, Kent, together with other observers, we watched a Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* feeding in close association with three Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, in a manner recalling that observed by J. Tallowin and R. E. Youngman (*Brit. Birds* 71: 182-183). All four birds were feeding in about 0.5 ha of scrub, dominated by sea-buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*, on low sand dunes and adjacent to private gardens. The warbler frequently perched in the open on panel-and-stake fencing, seemingly to maintain contact with the stonechats, its bold actions and its use of quite exposed vegetation in which to forage running entirely counter to our previous experience of this usually skulking species. On at least two occasions, the Dartford Warbler was seen to take sea-buckthorn berries. Apart from *The Handbook*, which comments that this species is 'said to eat blackberries in autumn', all other refer-

ences which we have been able to consult describe its diet as consisting exclusively of insects and other invertebrates. The question arises whether the apparently rare consumption of berries that we observed reflects the rather unusual habitat being exploited, or whether the atypically confiding behaviour of this individual allowed the observation of normal, if occasional, supplementary diet. Certainly, many other *Sylvia* warblers include berries in their diet.

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A letter commenting on the association between Dartford Warblers and Common Stonechats is published on pages 188-189. *BWP* (vol. 6), published since this note was accepted, notes that fruit is an occasional item of food on the Continent. EDS

Eye-colour of birds in dim light When finally the Flamborough Head, Humberside, Desert Warbler *Sylvia nano* came into view on the afternoon of 25th October 1991, the light was very dull within the lower canopy of the sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* where it was feeding. In quite a good close view, it struck us that the bird's eyes—which we had expected to be distinctively pale—appeared dark. Later, however, the bird moved up into the open crown of a leafless hawthorn *Crataegus* in rather better light, and it was clear that the bird was now sporting the expected pale eyes.

The coloured part of a bird's eye is of course its iris, and it occurred to us that in the dull conditions of the first encounter the pupils might be so dilated as to obscure most of the irides beneath the eye-lids, so creating the impression of a dark eye. In bright desert light, on the other hand, the pupils will be mere pin-holes, and the eyes staring and pale. If our only encounter with the bird had been in dull conditions, we might have recorded that the bird had dark eyes, implying, wrongly, a dark iris. This could be a potential pitfall when noting the details of birds in the poor light of dull autumn days.

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S. C. Madge has commented that he has had similar experiences with Desert Warbler, and also with Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortulana*, which can often show a large, dark pupil and only a narrow, inconspicuous, pale outer ring. P. G. Lansdown has also drawn attention to the change in perceived eye colour of individual Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* 'from dark to glaringly pale depending upon viewing distance, light conditions and the bird's mood (e.g. "sleepy" or alert).' EDS

Wintering Chiffchaff feeding on peanuts On the morning of 26th February 1989, through the window of my flat in central Aberdeen, Grampian, I saw a warbler perch on a wire feeder suspended from a birdtable in the garden; it flew off almost immediately. The feeder had been filled with fresh peanuts the previous day. I fetched my binoculars and relocated the warbler in a broom bush *Cytisus scoparius* in an adjoining garden, where I identified it as a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* of one of the northern/eastern races *abietinus/tristis*; after five minutes, it flew to the ground and foraged for a brief time in a vegetable plot, before flying out of sight. On the morning of 4th March 1989, I saw what appeared to be the same Chiffchaff on the rear wall of my garden and searching through a small spruce *Abies*. It then flew to the feeder, now half-empty, and pecked at the nuts for a minute or two,

before dropping to the ground, where it picked up and ate several items, either fallen fragments of peanuts or kitchen scraps and birdseed previously scattered there. The Chiffchaff then flew into a nearby rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, where it gave the typical alarm call of the race *abietinus*, before finally it flew off and was never seen again. I inspected the feeder with a hand-lens, but could find no insects on it or the nuts; I therefore concluded that the warbler had been feeding on peanuts. At all times when near the birdtable, the Chiffchaff was alone. From mid December to mid February, one Chiffchaff, at least, of the nominate race *collybita* had been in the neighbourhood of the flat; peanuts and birdtable food had been available throughout the period, but this individual was never seen to take advantage of this food source, preferring to search for insects on roses *Rosa* or on the rowan. I have found no reference in the literature to Chiffchaffs feeding on peanuts.

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Canopy display by Hawfinch Dr J. T. R. Sharrock's note on Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* using 'canopy technique' when feeding (*Brit. Birds* 81: 530-531) prompts us to record a similar posture by the Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*, although in this case the canopy was used as part of the courtship display. Since 1986, we have spent considerable time studying the activities of breeding Hawfinches, and the displays of adults have been particularly well observed. The canopy display of the male occurs at the apparent climax of activity, after which the pair immediately flies away. The male brings his wings forward to form the canopy and then pivots his body back and forth in front of the female (fig. 1); the two are only 10-20 cm apart. The display lasts only a few seconds, but may be repeated up to four times. We have witnessed it on at least half a dozen occasions, involving a minimum of four pairs. On one occasion, a second male displayed to the female of an established pair by building a nest platform and performing close to it: his attempts to solicit the female failed, and the platform was abandoned.



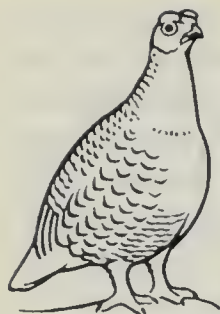
Fig. 1. Canopy display by male Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (S. J. Roberts)

This display is not mentioned by Guy Mountfort (1957, *The Hawfinch*), and, although it may be not unusual among wheatear species when foraging (*Brit. Birds* 85: 672), we have been unable to find any other reference to this posture being adopted by any other Western Palearctic passerine.

STEVE ROBERTS and JERRY LEWIS

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Similar displays are, of course, performed by several birds-of-paradise (Paradisaeini). EDS



Letters

Tree Swallow records in Britain Whilst reading the recent report on 'Rare birds in Great Britain' (*Brit. Birds* 85: 507-554), I was surprised to read, under the 1990 Isles of Scilly record of Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*, the comment that it was 'The first record for Britain and Ireland and the Western Palearctic.' Is the Rarities Committee unaware of a previous record of Tree Swallow in the Western Palearctic? I would refer them to T. A. Coward's *The Birds of the British Isles and their Eggs* (1958, Series One, page 390). Under Tree Swallow, he wrote 'Derby 1850. Wolley believed this record to be genuine: it was shot from amongst Sand-Martins [*Riparia riparia*] and is preserved at Norwich. It is an unlikely cage-bird.' Perhaps this record should now be reconsidered?

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Dr Alan Knox (Chairman, British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee) has commented as follows: 'Documentation concerning the Derby bird was included in the background papers circulated to BOURC along with the 1990 record from Scilly. Although it was said in 1893 that the Derby specimen was then in Norwich Museum (Whitlock, *Birds of Derbyshire*, p. 80), a recent search there failed to find either the specimen or any record of it in the Museum's registers (Dr A. G. Irwin *in litt.*).

'The Derby record was first published by John Wolley in a short note entitled "Supposed occurrence of a specimen of the Severn Swallow (*Hirundo bicolor*, Vieill.), at Derby, in 1850" (*Zoologist* 1853: 3806-3807). The title indicates Wolley's views on the bird. Wolley wrote "... though I have not much doubt that the bird was really shot at Derby, there is nevertheless quite a possibility of mistake" (my italics). Alfred Newton later commented on this record in another short article, this time entitled "Note on the supposed occurrence of the *Hirundo bicolor* ..." (*Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* 28 (1860): 131-132).

'There would appear to have been some doubts about the specimen's authenticity even at the time of the record. This doubt was not based on the species' ability to cross the Atlantic, but on the possibility of skins being muddled in the shop of the collector. With this original doubt and the specimen no longer traceable, there would seem little point in formally reconsidering the record.' EDS

Dartford Warblers associating with Common Stonechat An editorial comment on the note on Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* feeding in association with Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* in the Negev Desert, Israel (*Brit. Birds* 83: 72-73), implied that the association observed in Britain between Dartford Warbler *S. undata* and Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* was of a similar nature, namely that the warbler exploits a sudden concentration of invertebrates disturbed by the stonechat. Certainly, there is a clear association between the two species, not only in their British distribution (Moore 1975), but also in their habits, with Dartford Warblers following stonechats around in

search of prey (Tallowin & Youngman 1978; Thornett 1988; Cantelo & Roser 1993). While Spectacled Warblers may have been feeding on invertebrates fallen to the ground in the sparsely vegetated area of the Negev Desert, I do not, however, believe that this is the basis for a similar association occurring in the dense vegetation of British lowland heaths. Since 1986, I have observed Dartford Warblers on many occasions following Common Stonechats on the heaths of Devon: the stonechat invariably remains vigilant, and when it moves to another vantage point the warbler usually follows, landing in a clump of gorse *Ulex* or heather *Calluna vulgaris* nearby, but the warbler may search an area several metres from the stonechat without approaching closer; even if the warbler alighted on the same bush, the impenetrable nature of the vegetation would make it very difficult for it to locate any invertebrates dislodged. Consequently, since the Dartford Warbler does not appear to show a similar relationship with any other heathland passerine, I support the view put forward by Dr C. J. Bibby (*Brit. Birds* 71: 183) that it takes advantage of the vigilance of the stonechat. This enables it to spend more time in search of its prey in the 'knowledge' that the alert stonechat will be quick to warn it of any approaching predator.

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Divine or obscene? I have always pronounced the word passerine to rhyme with columbine, divine and Heselvine. Increasingly, however, it seems to me that younger birdwatchers (those under 60) make it rhyme with has-been, mean and obscene.

Which is correct?

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The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* and *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* both indicate pronunciation to rhyme with columbine. EDS



Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of the World. vol 1. Ostrich to ducks. Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliot & Jordi Sargatal. Lynx Editions, Barcelona, 1992. 696 pages; 446 colour plates; 568 distribution maps. ISBN 84-87334-09-1. £95.00.

With various handbooks already produced or under way (e.g. *BWP*, *The Birds of Africa*) it was inevitable that someone would take on the preparation of a handbook covering the birds of the world. With due respect, I doubt if many readers expected such a production to originate in Spain, but the authors, publishers and all concerned with this mammoth task must be congratulated for grasping the nettle. When it was announced, my first thought was whether I would live to see its completion if it was good. With 12 volumes planned, instead of the original ten, I would expect to do so if the timetable of one volume every 18 months is met. If, however, it subsequently matches *BWP* in the timetable stakes, I might have to hope that my children show more interest in birds than they have done to date.

A large book – necessary to meet the aim of describing and illustrating all of the world's 9,000+ species – its dimensions exceed those of *BWP* and are similar to those of *The Birds of Africa*. After an introduction explaining the objectives and scope, there is a chapter on the Class Aves. Illustrated with 17 anatomical colour plates, it provides an informative account of topics such as evolution, anatomy, physiology, breeding biology and behaviour.

The meat of this first volume, however, is the systematic list, which, in 27 chapters, covers Ostrich *Struthio camelus* to ducks. Each chapter is dedicated to a family and is in two parts. The first is a general account of the family, liberally illustrated with photographs, with sections on systematics, morphological aspects, habitat, general habits, voice, food and feeding, breeding, movements, relationship with man, status and conservation, and a general bibliography. The second section contains the colour plates and individual species accounts. The latter contain concise statements at species level for most of the above topics. They also include information about subspecies and distribution (with maps), descriptive notes and a species bibliography. On systematics, the authors decided, probably wisely, not to leap in and follow Sibley & Monroe (1990, *Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World*), but have adopted a traditional approach based on Morony, Bock & Farrand (1975, *Reference List of the Birds of the World*). The text mentions all the major variations, however, sometimes in detail, so the alternatives are not ignored.

First impression of the text is one of disappointment. Of particular interest is the up-to-date information on the status of, and threats facing, each species. With assistance from the ICBP, the status of each species is classed as endangered, vulnerable, rare, insufficiently known or not globally threatened. On the other hand, the descriptive notes for each species, for example, are very short and in most cases provide no more information than is available in standard field guides. This compares unfavourably with the identification sections of regional handbooks, but it should be remembered that for some species even brief summaries will be new information for the majority of birders who cannot afford extensive ornithological libraries. It is also unfair to make such comparisons with a handbook such as *BWP*. As the authors point out, to attempt full treatment for all the world's species would require 50 or more volumes, would probably be completed by their grandchildren and would be affordable only to a select few. Closer acquaintance reveals that the family texts, taken together with the individual species accounts, do in fact provide a mine of information. The family texts are also very readable, which cannot be said for much of *BWP*. In addition, the extensive bibliography provides plenty of pointers for those who wish to find out more about particular species.

I suspect that many people will buy this handbook principally for the colour plates and photographs. A major drawback with the 50 identification plates (actually 51, as there is one

unnumbered) is that they illustrate adults in breeding plumage only, although they also cover distinctive subspecies. Again the trade-off between complete coverage and size comes into play. The illustrations are, however, very good. In most cases, I prefer them to their equivalents in *BLP* and *The Birds of Africa*. The principal artist, Francesc Jutjar, is a major talent who stands comparison with many better-known names. The photographs, too, are of good quality, although selected primarily to show aspects of biology or ecology rather than as portraits. They depict almost half the species covered, and preference was given to those of rare or little-known species. Many appeared refreshingly unfamiliar to me and a check against the *Hamlyn Photographic Guide to Birds of the World*, the *Complete Book of Southern African Birds*, the *Audubon Master Guide to Birding*, and *A Photographic Guide to Seabirds of the World* showed virtually no overlap with the photographs in those books.

So, what's the verdict? A number of birders I have spoken to have expressed uncertainty about purchase. In my view, this is an important work which, despite its understandable limitations, deserves to succeed.

ALAN BROWN

Endangered Birds. By James Ferguson-Lees. Illustrated by Emma Faull. George Philip, London, 1992. 192 pages; 103 colour illustrations. ISBN 0-540-01248-3. £19.99.

Chapters are devoted to each of the world's nine biogeographic regions. They include some simple geographic information and describe the avifauna in terms of families and numbers of species, with separate sections on introduced, extinct and threatened species. Inevitably, the detail is sparse and adds little to ICBP's listing of the world's threatened birds (Collar & Andrew, 1988, *Birds to Watch*).

Comparison is invited with Mountfort's 1988 *Rare Birds of the World*, which also aimed to make Red Data lists of birds and their significance more widely known. Mountfort included every threatened species, with a brief paragraph on each. The present work aims to be more synthetic. It reads like a selective catalogue of facts which are shocking enough but difficult to embrace in total, especially as there are many species and place names which will be unfamiliar to readers.

Over 100 threatened species are illustrated by Emma Faull, whose style is decorative or impressionist. Some paintings are startling, but, I suspect, they will attract a wide range of reaction and will not appeal to those who prefer field-guide precision.

Bird conservation commands amazing support in northern Europe, while most of the seriously threatened species are in the tropics. A more global view will be required if the wealthy countries are to help to tackle the world's conservation problems. I passionately believe that there is an important challenge to make this message more widely heard.

COLIN J. BIBBY

Where to Watch Birds in France. La Ligue Française pour la Protection des Oiseaux. Translated by Tony Williams. Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1992. 269 pages; numerous maps and line drawings. £12.99.

Despite boasting no more than French O-level (failed), I have found the original French version of this book, *Où voir les oiseaux en France*, an invaluable companion on French birding trips. France, the biggest country in Western Europe, has a tremendous variety of habitats, but has often been neglected by British birders. This has changed a little in recent years, as more and more people have discovered the delights of watching thousands of migrating Common Cranes *Grus grus*, just a five-hour drive from Calais, or watching breeding Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* on the French Atlantic coast. Now that we have at last an English version, we can expect more British birders to be inspired to enjoy the delights of pursuing birds in a country where the food, the wine and the countryside make a combination that is hard to beat.

Tony Williams has made a fine job of the translation, but the simplified maps are not nearly so informative as the originals in the French edition. Much of the latter's charm has also been lost in its anglicisation, for most of the line-drawings have gone, along with the tiny silhouettes which indicated which species could be found at a particular site. Nor is the book so well produced, for the French version has a waterproof cover, and is designed for hard use, whereas the Helm edition is much less durable. If you can read French, stick to the French version.

Though there is an extensive species index, a site and region index would have been far more

useful. Though this book covers the majority of the major sites, it is a slimmer volume than *Where to Watch Birds in the West Midlands*, in the same series. France deserves a much fatter, more wide-ranging work than this.

DAVID TOMLINSON

The Birds of Pakistan. vol. 2. Passeriformes: pittas to buntings. By T. J. Roberts. Oxford University Press, Karachi, Oxford, New York & Delhi, 1992. 651 pages; 24 colour plates; 46 line-drawings; 284 distribution maps. ISBN 019-577405-1. £40.00.

This is the second and concluding volume of the author's monumental handbook to the birds of Pakistan. It is produced to the same high standards as volume 1, which appeared in 1991 (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 84: 583) and which contained comprehensive introductory chapters followed by species accounts covering 347 non-passerine species.

This volume has no introductory sections, other than a checklist of species, and almost the entire text comprises the species accounts for the remaining 313 species. All the passerines are covered in this volume, and the individual accounts average slightly longer than those for the non-passerines: almost two pages per species. The book concludes with an extensive bibliography and an index (relating to this volume only).

The species accounts follow the same format as before, and are arranged under the headings of 'Description', 'Habitat, distribution and status', 'Habits', 'Breeding Biology' and 'Vocalisations'. The information contained again combines a thorough research of the literature with a wealth of personal observations gained from the author's long residence in the country. The style is readable yet authoritative, demonstrating a deep understanding of the birds of this comparatively neglected region. It seems churlish deliberately to find faults with such a monumental work, but in several cases I found the presentation of names at the beginning of each species account slightly confusing; I would have preferred to have seen a single English and scientific name given for each species, with alternative names and synonyms listed more discreetly, rather than a series of names in bold, large letters (the heading for *Sitta europaea* is a particularly unfortunate example).

Almost every species account includes a distribution map, and these are again both clearly presented and well researched. A number of line-drawings are included, but the species are largely illustrated by 24 colour plates, all painted by the author, depicting 248 species; in many cases, additional figures show sexual, seasonal and racial variations. Although one has to admire the enormous solo achievement of both writing and illustrating this book, the plates are a little disappointing. Many of the birds look like museum specimens (and were presumably painted from skins) and do not do the birds justice. Nevertheless, key identification features are often accurately depicted, and the colours are generally well reproduced.

The two volumes will undoubtedly remain the standard reference on the birds of Pakistan for many years and no-one with an interest in the region should be without them.

NIGEL REDMAN

Birds, Discovery and Conservation: 100 years of the 'Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club'. Edited by David Snow. Helm Information, Mountfield, 1992. 198 pages; 1 colour plate. £19.95.

Rather than a chronicle, this book is mainly an anthology from the pages of the BOC *Bulletin* which aims to capture what the dust jacket calls 'the essential flavour' of British ornithology, aided by some discreet commentaries from the editor and others. There are some 50 separate items in all, organised under nine main heads. Among contributions by many distinguished ornithologists of the past, I particularly enjoyed those by two writers of great lucidity: R. E. Moreau, my old friend and mentor, on the Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, and David Lack on the Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. The story of W. Eagle Clarke's 'discovery' of Fair Isle in 1907, when he recorded 117 species during the two migration periods (no fewer than 17 being additions to the British List), also deserves special mention.

This fascinating, instructive, and most entertaining book can be recommended to birdwatchers and ornithologists alike. I would have liked a more comprehensive index and more background information on several of the personalities mentioned. A brief account of the *Bulletin* is given, but it is a pity that the opportunity was not taken to list all its editors and to give a more detailed history of the Club itself. The BOC's role in protecting the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* during the first two decades of this century is, however, well covered.

Many happy returns, BOC!

K. E. L. SIMMONS

Downland Wildlife: a naturalist's year in the North and South Downs. By John F. Burton. Illustrated by John Davis.

(George Philip, London, 1992. 187 pages. ISBN 0-540012-599. £16.99) As the author says, this book is for the layman and general reader, rather than the experienced naturalist. The broad range of material discussed is extremely readable and informative, helping to put my knowledge of birdlife into a broader context. The book has a seasonal format, ideal for describing what to expect on any one visit, with a short section on selected nature reserves and other areas of interest.

There are a few niggling errors, and I feel that the presentation and the landscape paintings do not do either the text or the Downs justice. John Davis's scraper-board drawings, however, are a delight, and I can recommend the book to those wishing to learn more about the ecology of our downland wildlife.

DON TAYLOR

The Wild Bird Garden. By Leslie Jackman.

(Souvenir Press, London, 1992. 176 pages) Leslie Jackman, teacher and pioneer natural history film-maker, shares a lifetime of bird-gardening experience—particularly apposite at a time when a BTO survey has shown a significant decline in common garden birds, especially Robins *Erithacus rubecula* and Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*. The book is attractive and informative, full of fascinating facts about such things as the best design for a squirrel-proof peanut-feeder, breeding boxes for mealworms, advice concerning cultivated plants and shrubs, and regional country names for well-known species.

DENNIS FURNELL

Prideaux John Selby: a gentleman naturalist. By Christine E. Jackson.

(Spred-den Press, Stocksfield, 1992. 191 pages. ISBN 1-871739-26-8. £25.00) Selby, a brilliant etcher, was sandwiched between the wood-engraver Thomas Bewick and the lithographers of the later nineteenth century led by John Gould. His large body of work deserves better recognition, and Mrs Jackson is a sympathetic biographer who has written a most interesting, well-illustrated and readable book. A delightful chapter describes a five-man, five-week natural history survey in the summer of 1834 of Sutherland, then remote and unexplored. Of current interest is the little-known fact that Selby established more English names of birds than any other nineteenth-century ornithologist, including Manx

Shearwater, Marsh Harrier, and Tree, Rock, Meadow and Richard's Pipits.

ROBERT GILLMOR

Birds by Colour: the simplest identification guide. By Mike Lambert. Illustrated by Alan Pearson.

(Blandford, London, 1992. 160 pages. £8.99) This new, pocket-sized, 'user-friendly' identification guide includes a series of keys based on the features used unconsciously by experienced birdwatchers—namely colour, size, habitat and status (e.g. migratory or resident). This easy-to-use book includes most of the birds to be seen in the British Isles, including domesticated dove and waterfowl species, the bêtes noire of birdwatching beginners. Even a total novice will be able to follow the colour-coded keys to identify not only the species, but also the age and sex; for example, the keys make it possible to identify a female Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* before knowing the colours of the adult male, and vice versa. Alan Pearson's paintings are simple and clear. My one, minor, criticism is the lack of scientific names: birds are given only their common English names. The book is recommended by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, and is a very useful identification tool for beginners.

DENNIS FURNELL

Birds of Prey of the British Isles. By Brian P. Martin.

(David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1992. 192 pages. ISBN 0-7153-9782-6. £16.99) The book opens with two interesting chapters, the first describing the special adaptations of birds of prey (including owls) and the second our mostly disastrous relationship with them. Then follow 23 species-accounts of all our breeding diurnal and nocturnal raptors plus two winter visitors. These are packed with information and well illustrated with photographs and 25 specially commissioned paintings by Alastair Proud. This book is not for the specialist, but its wide coverage and accessible presentation make it ideal for anyone with a general knowledge who is keen to learn more.

RJP

Forest Merlins in Scotland: their requirements and management. By Jack Orchel.

(The Hawk and Owl Trust, London, 1992. 121 pages. ISBN 0-950-31874-4. Paperback £12.95) This well-produced, glossy booklet mixes original observation, review of knowledge of Merlins *Falco columbarius*, and some conservation recommendations. In Galloway, Merlins appear to have fluctuated in numbers in the last 40 years while extensive afforestation of favoured moorlands occurred.

Other factors, such as levels of keeping and pesticide contamination, also presumably changed. At some time from about 1980, they started nesting in the plantation forests, provided that sufficient open ground survived nearby, an observation which parallels previously published findings from Northumbria and Wales. The conservation recommendations are largely derived from general principle rather than analysis of new data. Least expected is the author's belief that study of Merlins may itself be bad for their breeding success. He recommends that landowners and the statutory authorities should curtail it. Raptor enthusiasts beware! COLIN J. BIBBY

Les Fauvettes: leurs chants, leurs cris. By Daniel J. Pernin. (Pernin, France, 1992. Cassette. Running time 69½ minutes. F80.00) In the same series as *Les Mésanges* ('The Tits'), reviewed *Brit. Birds* 82: 228, with excellent coverage of the songs and calls of 32 warbler species and helpful comparisons of those that are confusingly similar. JTRS

The Migration of Knots. Edited by Theunis Piersma & Nick Davidson. (Wader Study Group, Tring, 1992. 209 pages. Paperback £15.00) The proceedings of a workshop held in Denmark in September 1989 on the migration of the Red Knot *Calidris canutus*. The 28 papers between them review the current state of knowledge on the migrations of the various races of Red Knot, so that it can now be claimed with some justification that this is the avian species with the best-known migration system. A summary of the genetics of the races of Red Knot, set in the context of the genus *Calidris*, includes the suggestion that a fifth race (*C. c. roselaari*) should be added to the generally accepted four (*canutus*, *islandica*, *rufa* and *rogersi*). This subspecies breeds on Wrangel Island and Alaska, and is presumed to migrate down the west coast of North America, and perhaps winters in the Gulf of Mexico. Essential reading for any wader enthusiast. RJC

The Robin. By Mike Read, Martin King & Jake Allsop. (Blandford Press, London, 1992. 128 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2156-1. £16.99) Readable and well illustrated; not a scientific

monograph, à la 'Poyser', but a personal account of a much-loved species. Since two-thirds of the three authors make up the Swift Picture Library, it is hardly surprising that the photographs make up a very important part of the book. The text covers the life history of the Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, using information garnered from many sources, plus many personal anecdotes. Dedicated Robin enthusiasts will still await David Harper's promised scientific monograph, but those captivated by Britain's national bird will find this an interesting and informative book. CHRIS MEAD

Oiseaux de Guyane: the birds of French Guiana. By Olivier Tostain, Jean-Luc Dujardin, Christian Erard & Jean-Marc Thiollay. (Société d'Études Ornithologiques, Brunoy, France, 1992. 222 pages. F260) The birds of French Guiana, with accounts of some 800 species (about five per page) wholly in French, apart from the English names. There is a seven-page English summary, and separate indexes for French, scientific and English names. Slightly less than one-fifth of the species are illustrated by photographs or paintings. This is essentially a list of Guianan birds, with details of habitat, distribution and breeding status, not an identification guide. Well designed, with excellent production. JTRS

Watching Wildlife: a field guide to the wildlife habitats of Britain. By Geoffrey Young & Elaine Franks. (George Philip, London, 1992. 223 pages. ISBN 0540012629. £14.99) One of the most fortunate aspects of nature-watching on these crowded islands of ours is the large number of wildlife habitats afforded by the diverse geology and weather patterns. With the exception of a few mountain tops and inaccessible sea cliffs, virtually none of Britain's landscape lies untouched by the hand of mankind—oddly enough, this is one of the main reasons for the wide range of habitats and wildlife. *Watching Wildlife* is a beautifully written and valuable guide to this natural variety of landscape features and attendant ecosystems, whether they be blanket bogs or beech woods. With its delightful and accurate illustrations, this guide is destined to become a standard popular reference work. DENNIS FURNELL

ALSO RECEIVED

Bird Table Talk. By CJ Wildbird Foods & The Forestry Commission. Two cassettes: English Table Talk; Scottish Table Talk. (Sounds Natural, Fulbrook, 1992. Twin pack £11.00; singles £6.00 each)

Lifesong: amazing sounds of threatened birds. (Mankind Music in association with the British Library National Sound Archive & ICBP, London, 1992. Compact disc £12.99; cassette £8.50)



The 'Braer' incident

WITHIN A FORTNIGHT of the tanker *Braer* going aground near Sumburgh Head, Shetland, 1,000 birds had been picked up dead, well over 200 had been rescued alive and many more had been seen oiled. Half the victims were Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, and there was also heavy mortality among Black Guillemots *Cepphus grylle*, Long-tailed Ducks *Clangula hyemalis* and Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima*. We shall probably never know how many thousands of birds actually died.

The long-term effects of the spill will not be known for some time yet, but they will be considerable—it was all too easy to forget about these as we gained some comfort from the fact that the freak weather dispersed the oil so quickly, or as we pitied the individual oiled birds shown on TV and in the papers. We have seen all this before, of course, many, many times, and the real question we have to answer is why we allowed it to happen again. Why are large (and often doubtfully seaworthy) ships with potentially lethal cargoes permitted to pass so close to so many areas of outstanding importance for birds and other wildlife? The full enquiry set up by Government will address this and many other aspects of the Shetland disaster, but whether its deliberations produce some useful action or just another lot of waffle remains to be seen . . .

Miracle

During its reporting of the grounding of the tanker *Braer* in Shetland, the BBC Nine O'Clock News showed pictures of a badly oiled Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*. To relieve the gloom of subsequent reports of the incident, the same programme said a few days later (on 8th January) that this particular bird had been cleaned successfully and was on the

way to recovery. The original footage of the bird was shown again, together with pictures of the cleaned bird. What a miracle the cleaning process was! Not only was the bird now immaculate, but it had also changed into a Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*. (Contributed by David Harris)

New global partnership to protect birds

BirdLife International, launched in March, has brought together the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) and national bird protection organisations in a new global partnership working for the conservation of birds and their habitats. The RSPB, whose well-established programme of international work dates back to 1979, is the UK representative in the partnership: its existing programme, involving projects in 30 countries, will expand in close collaboration with its BirdLife partners. More than 1,000 species are under serious threat, particularly from habitat destruction – forests felled, marshes and lakes drained, grasslands transformed and mudflats ‘reclaimed’. BirdLife International aims to unite the voices of its partners and become the leading authority on the status of the world’s birds and their habitats. It will link developed and developing countries, amateurs and professionals, scientists

and conservation managers, and pursue co-ordinated international policies, campaigns and action programmes based on sound scientific analysis. It is already represented in 112 countries. Alistair Gammell, Head of International at the RSPB, commented that hitherto international bird conservation has been rather disjointed, with no single national organisation big enough to tackle the problems alone, and that the new set-up would be different, finding commonsense solutions to problems affecting birds and, through them, to wider conservation issues. This is a big and important change: BirdLife International has evolved from the ICBP, which is no more, in name at least. All *BB* readers will wish the new partnership well. Its world HQ is in Cambridge and there are regional offices in Washington DC (USA), Quito (Ecuador), Bogor (Indonesia) and Brussels (Belgium).

Young Ornithologists impress

The three winners of the title Young Ornithologists of the Year (plate 39) were each presented with their inscribed award certificate and £150 book prize by RSPB President, Ian Prestt, at The Lodge in early January. During the day, the judges were very impressed by the winners’ expertise and obvious potential. Senior winner, Jane Reid, for instance, plans to spend a year on North Ronaldsay before

entering her university course; intermediate winner, Alex Lees, is already an avid and very knowledgeable *BB* reader; and junior winner, Jenny Blair, has been making regular observations in her ‘home patch’ for four years.

For details of this annual competition, which is sponsored jointly by *BB* and *Young Telegraph*, write to the Young Ornithologists’ Club, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

39. YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR. Left to right, junior winner, Jenny Blair, senior winner, Jane Reid, and intermediate winner, Alexander Lees, Bedfordshire, January 1993

RSPB



Licensed pest control

To bring UK legislation into line with the EC Birds Directive, the Department of the Environment has introduced (on 1st January 1993) a licensing system to cover the control of the 13 so-called 'pest species' listed on Schedule 2 Part II of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. In effect, because the licences are annual and general, nothing has really changed: what the law calls an 'authorised person' (a landowner or anyone acting with his or her permission) can still kill any of the 13 species—by legal methods—at any time, without having to justify such actions in any way whatsoever. Where real damage is being caused, fair enough; but is it right that an innocuous bird such as the Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* is on the pest list, or, for that matter, that the much-maligned Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* is fair game too? One day, perhaps, somebody will have the courage to stand up and challenge the 'pest list' and the rather dubious way in which it is maintained.

Norfolk Bird Club

The last part of 1992 saw the formation of the new Norfolk Bird Club, complete with the first issue of its bi-monthly bulletin. Dave Holman, bringing this event to our notice, remarked that it is incredible that one of the UK's top birding counties has been without a county-wide club for so long. Membership costs a mere £7 per annum; more details from Norfolk Bird Club, The Old Bakery, High Street, Docking, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE31 8NH.

Peregrine quarry

Mention was made last month (*Brit. Birds* 86: 148) of an *Irish Birds* paper on Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*. The revelation that so many Peregrines are nesting in quarries is particularly interesting—this habit seems to have contributed substantially to a recent increase in the Irish population, which may now stand at some 450 breeding pairs. In Leinster, Niall Moore, Paul Kelly and Fiona Lang, from the Department of Zoology at University College, Dublin, found Peregrines nesting in 21 of the 48 quarries they surveyed—including 15 fully active quarries. Jim Wells, working in Northern Ireland, reports similar trends for Ulster Peregrines.

Slimbridge Decoy

The Berkeley New Decoy at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, dates back to 1843, a time when such things were not an uncommon feature in parts of the UK. At the end of December 1992, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust opened a new hide, wetland walkway and decoy museum, all sponsored by *Gulf Oil*, with the result that one of the few working decoys in the country (used nowadays for ringing, of course) is now open to the public every day. It is well worth seeing.

British Birdwatching Fair

The dates for the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water have been changed to 20th–22nd August 1993.

R & M Conference 1993

This was an excellent conference—indeed, one of the best, in terms of quality of talks, to which I have been. Some criticism of the perceived attitude of the Ringing Office towards ringers was voiced, but if ringers are unhappy then they should offer themselves for election to the Ringing Committee, which no-one bothered to do this year.

Highlights for me included Myrfin Owen's talk on some of the fascinating facts learnt from over 20 years of individually marking the Solway Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* and Rudi Drent's, which also referred to the same marking programme, while developing the theme of how long-term ringing studies can aid conservation. Alan Leitch's talk on Bohemian Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulus* in Aberdeen was informative and witty, and Andy Evans reported a striking increase in numbers

of Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* in southwest England, following management based on his research.

There were excellent talks on Barn Owls *Tyto alba*, Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*. For those who still think of me as a wildfowl specialist, I should point out that Hen Harrier and Barn Owl have topped my ringing list in the last three years, so I found plenty of interest, as did the rest of the audience, judging by their reactions.

The *British Birds* mystery bird photograph competition attracted a respectable 83 entries. Five people tied with all-correct scores: James Burgess, John Marchant, Oscar Merne, Will Norman and Pete Fearon, the last-named winning the bottle of champagne on a draw.

(ALIO)

Retirement of Professor Janet Kear

Janet Kear has now retired after 34 years working for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, initially as a research officer investigating, among other things, goose damage to agricultural land in both Scotland and Iceland, and also the eggs and the young of wildfowl, covering as diverse a spectrum as the factors affecting hatchability of captive-laid eggs and the innate behaviour of the goslings and ducklings. Subsequent posts within the Trust have included Curator of Martin Mere, Avicultural Co-ordinator and, latterly, Director of Centres. Her long list of publications includes two 'Poyser' books, *The Hawaiian Goose* 1980, with A. J. Berger and the delightful *Man and Wild-*

fowl (1990).

Janet has always been very active in wider ornithological and conservation affairs, notably with the British Ornithologists' Union, where she was a distinguished Editor of *Ibis* for seven years, followed soon after by three years as President, in both cases being the first woman to fill these posts, which may be a comment on the past nature of the BOU, but is certainly a reflection of her outstanding abilities.

She has been editing *Wildfowl* for the last four years, a task which I hope she will continue so long as it does not get in the way of what we all hope will be a long and happy retirement. (ALIO)

Tresco with Will

Based at the Island Hotel, luxury birdwatching holidays on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, are being run by Will Wagstaff Bird Recorder for Scilly and Field Officer for the Isles of Scilly Environmental Trust—during 26th April to 1st May and 18th-23rd October 1993. For details, write to the Island Hotel, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, Cornwall TR21 0PU; phone 0720-22883; or fax 0720-23008.

Welsh birds in 1991

The latest *Welsh Bird Report*, no. 5, covering 1991, is 88 pages packed with information. The systematic list (English, scientific and Welsh bird names) is full of detail and is followed by a ringing report. Four papers, all relating to Wales, cover conservation issues, breeding Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in 1991, migrating Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus*, and a thorough review of breeding waders. For your copy, send £4.00 to Welsh Ornithological Society, M. Shrubbs, Hillcrest, Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys LD5 4TL.

News from Fife

The Fife Bird Club has been busy with the opening (in December 1992) of its new hide at Edenside, about 6 km northwest of St Andrews on the Eden estuary, where it overlooks a wader roost. The Club's first hide site is rather different, giving good views of sea-duck off Methil Power Station on the Forth. Two more are planned for the future, one on Fife Ness and the other at the ace skua-watching spot at Braefoot Bay, both of which will probably attract visitors from far and wide. Club Secretary Rab Shand also tells us that the twelfth Fife Bird Report is now available, price £3.50 (incl. p & p), from D. Dickson, 45 Hawthorn Terrace, Thornton, Fife, Scotland.

New Recorder

Mrs Judith Smith, 12 Edge Green Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, Lancashire WN1 8SL, has taken over from J. P. Day as Recorder for Greater Manchester.

Silly corner

Many people spotted 'Golden-ringed Warbler' (BTO please note) in *The Guardian* at Christmas, but only Trevor Warren seems to have noticed an even better New Worldster, the 'Blackpool Warbler' featured in an *Essex Birds* piece on Fair Isle. Captions are often as much fun as misprints: the best we have seen for a long time was in the *Birmingham Post* at the end of 1992, under photographs of a Blue Tit and a Blackbird, which read 'Festive Treat: a Redwing like the one which visited British shores this Christmas'.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—Northeast

Dave Holman—East Anglia

Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland

David Tomlinson—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

Keith Vinicombe—Southwest

John Wilson—Northwest



BirdLife International news

Polish promise In February, the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP) recruited its 1,000th member, just one year after its formal launch in February 1992. It also produced the first issue of its membership magazine. These excellent achievements follow the exciting announcement of the selection of the Polish Wetlands as the fundraising project for the In Focus County Bird Race and the British Birdwatching Fair, and Swarovski Optik's pledge of £30,000 for the project.

The wetlands project includes the purchase of Karsiborska Kepa island, to be established as OTOP's first reserve. The reserve will give OTOP a chance to promote itself further to the general public and demonstrate how Poland's wildlife can be protected.

With a headquarters in Gdansk and two full-time members of staff, OTOP is already working on a number of projects and proposed projects, including Chełm Marshes, areas on the River Warta, Bielawa Bog, a Polish IBA inventory, an action plan for the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* and, of course, the new programme for wetlands. Jacek Szostakowski, OTOP's Director, is extremely dedicated and very well informed on the conservation issues in his country, and there is no doubt that OTOP is well on the way to becoming the powerful and effective voice that is so desperately needed to help conserve what are some of the most important sites for wildlife in Europe.

If you would like to support OTOP, please contact BirdLife International at the address below.

GEORGINA GREEN

BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA



Announcements

Carl Zeiss Award *Carl Zeiss—Germany*, the sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee, has announced an extension of the Carl Zeiss Award. The high quality, sew-on, woven badges—provided in recognition of the contributions made by photographers whose photographs of rarities appear in *British Birds*, either with the annual 'Report on rare birds' or with 'Seasonal reports' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 27)—will also be presented to observers whose exemplary descriptions are chosen for inclusion in the feature 'From the Rarities Committee's files'.

The first two additional recipients of these badges are, therefore, Alan R. Dean (*Isabelline Wheatear Oenanthe isabellina*, *Brit. Birds* 86: 3-5) and John Cantelo (*Arctic Redpolls Carduelis hornemanni*, *Brit. Birds* 86: 135-138).

An unacceptable Norfolk record of Baird's Sandpiper The January issue of *British Birds* carried a letter and editorial comment about a claimed Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* from Norfolk in 1903, suggesting that the record was no longer acceptable (*Brit. Birds* 86: 22). We should have pointed out that the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee has yet to examine the recommendation to delete this record. Amongst its other tasks, the BOURC maintains a watching brief over records of major rarities, particularly those prior to the formation of the British Birds Rarities Committee in 1958. This is especially relevant in this case as the Norfolk record is currently the first for Britain and Ireland.

The BOURC will be looking at the Norfolk record, together with a specimen record from St Kilda in 1911 which may become the first for Britain and Ireland if the deletion of the Norfolk record is confirmed. EDS

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th February to 14th March 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

- Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* Washed up dead on tideline at Landguard Nature Reserve (Suffolk), 17th February (origin uncertain).
- American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Male, Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 12th March.
- Common Teal** *A. crecca* Male of Nearctic race *carolinensis*, Acton Lake (Co. Down), 5th March.
- Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* Male, Ballyallia (Co. Clare), from January to 22nd February.
- Lesser Scaup** *Anas affinis* Rutland Water (Leicestershire), 11th-17th February; male at Hillsborough Lake (Co. Down) stayed to 20th February.
- Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* Adult, Fair Head (Co. Antrim), late February, apparently commuting to (and from?) Kintyre (Strathclyde).
- Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* White-phase, Tory Island (Co. Donegal), still present to mid February.
- Killdeer Plover** *Charadrius vociferans* South Mainland (Shetland), at least 14th March.
- Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* Influx from mid February of 115, including 15 at Foreland (Isle of Wight), 20th February, and at least 30 at Copt Point (Kent), 28th February.
- Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* Influx continuing into Ireland, including at least ten first-winters; best counts: two at Sligo (Co. Sligo), 26th February, five at Galway City (Co. Galway), 27th February, five at Sandymount (Co. Dublin), 13th March, and seven at Blemerville (Co. Kerry), late February to early March; at least 30 in Ireland in early March.
- Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoideus* At least 100 in Ireland; best counts: 24 at Killybegs (Co. Donegal), 24th February, 14 at Sligo, 26th February, and 12 at Galway City, 27th February.
- Ross's Gull** *Rhodestethia rosca* Individual at Inverness still present to 13th March; Flamborough Head (Humberside), 28th February.
- Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* St Martin's (Isles of Scilly), 13th-14th March.
- Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* Near Skibbereen (Co. Cork), 12th March.
- European Serin** *Serinus serinus* Spurn (Humberside), at least 14th March.
- Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Beddington Sewage-farm (Greater London), 9th February to 13th March.
- Little Bunting** *E. pusilla* Beddington Sewage-farm, 13th February to at least 14th March; near Wantage (Oxfordshire), 18th February to 8th March.

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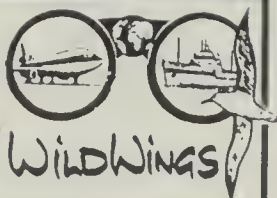
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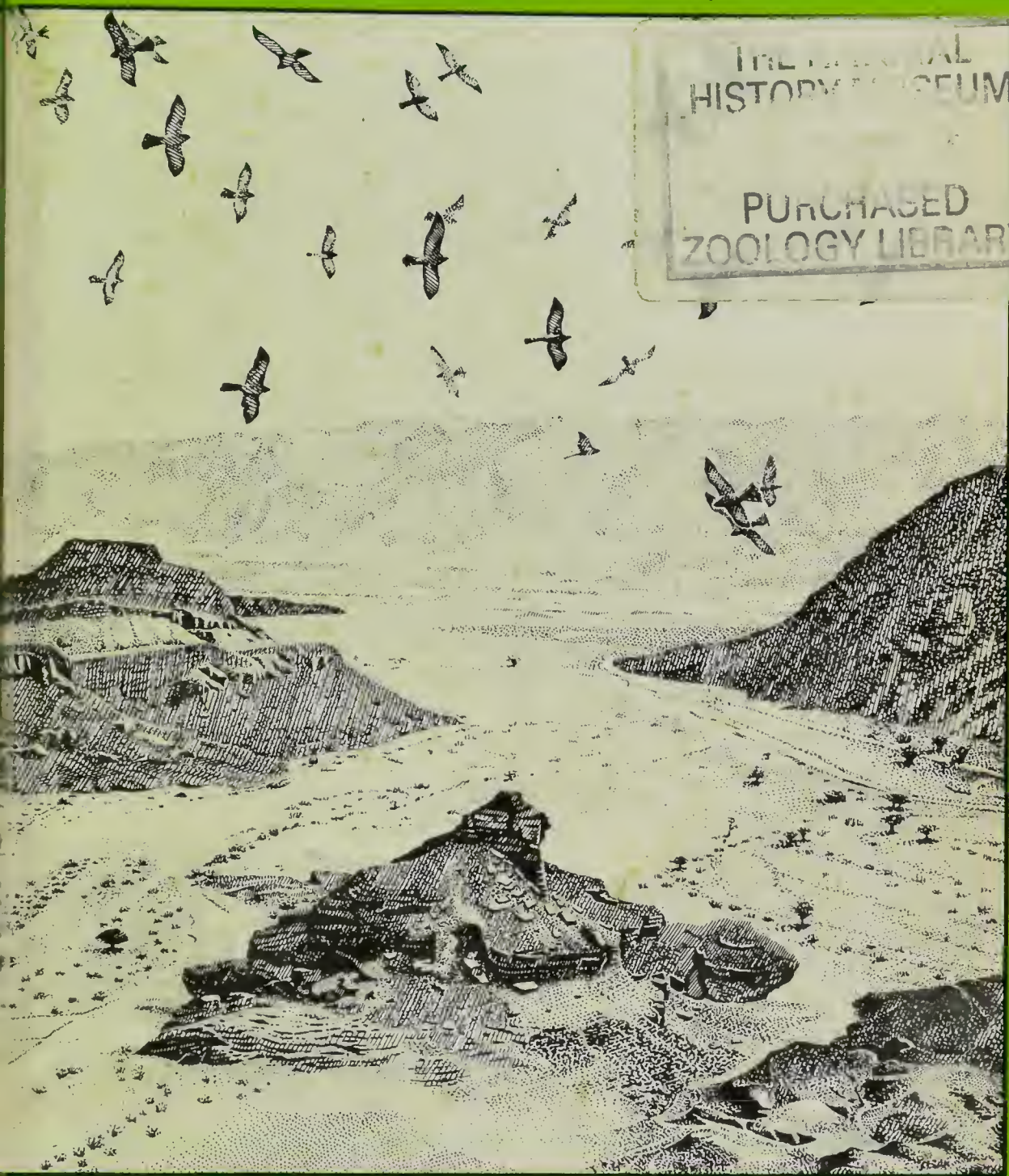
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British Birds

Volume 86 Number 5 May 1993



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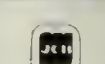
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British Birds

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14 MAY 1993

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The Great Black-headed Gull in Britain

Keith Vinicombe and Peter J. Hopkin

on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Of the large number of rarities on the British and Irish list, a select few have, over the years, achieved near-mythical status: Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*, Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis*, Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* and White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*, to name but a few. Despite the huge upsurge in birdwatching in recent years, they have remained extremely infrequent and unlikely visitors to these shores. Their mystique is compounded by the fact that they appear to represent relics from a misty, bygone era: the Victorian age, when the rarity-hunter was the upper-class country gentleman, trudging the marshes of Sussex or Kent armed, not with binoculars, but with a gun.

Another species which clearly falls among the elite is the Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*. The only two modern claims—Calf of Man, Isle of Man, on 21st May 1966, and Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, during 31st March to 14th April 1967—have both been rejected by the British Birds Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 78: 553; 74: 473). The latter proved to be a

second-year Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus* with head staining (see *Brit. Birds* 61: plate 48). This left only five old records:

1. Off Exmouth, Devon, end of May or early June 1859
2. Telscombe Cliffs, East Sussex, 4th January 1910
3. Bournemouth, Dorset (formerly Hampshire), end of November to early December 1924
4. Cromer, Norfolk, 2nd-9th March 1932
5. Hove, West Sussex, 9th August 1932

In the light of the BBRC decisions, the BOURC reviewed these records, and the results were both interesting and rewarding.

When judging old records, one obviously has to make allowances for the lack of modern-day precision in the descriptions, but, nevertheless, the records must remain convincing on the basis of the available evidence. Surprisingly, only the original Devon record proved to be acceptable, and the following account is based on D'Urban & Mathew (1895).

The Devon record

At the end of May or the beginning of June 1859, a boatman named William Pine was fishing for bass in the River Exe off Exmouth when he noticed the gull, a summer-plumaged adult, in company with a flock of 'ordinary gulls'. Its remarkable size and appearance attracted the attention of the boatman, who, having his gun with him, shot it. (Those were the days!) Pine's story was independently confirmed by W. Taylor of Bridgwater, who was in the boat with him. Pine presented the bird to F. W. L. Ross of Topsham, Devon, who had no idea what it was. In October 1859, Ross showed the specimen to W. S. D'Urban and the Rev. M. A. Mathew, subsequent authors of *The Birds of Devon* (1895), and they persuaded him to allow them to take it to the British Museum. There, G. R. Gray at once led them to the only specimen of Great Black-headed Gull, then exhibited in the Museum's galleries. At Gray's request, the gull was left with him for exhibition, but, at the death of Ross's widow in 1865, the Ross collection was bequeathed to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. The Great Black-headed Gull accompanied the collection and was then under the care of D'Urban and Mathew for nearly 20 years. They described it as being in good condition, although it had needed restuffing. In 1969, Robert Moore, in his *Birds of Devon*, stated that the specimen was still in the museum. Although the story was convincing, was it still there? What if it had been misidentified?

To lay these fears to rest, PJH visited the museum in June 1992 and was met by Bryan Meloy, who showed him the gull, now residing in the reserve collection. PJH was able to take several photographs (plates 40 & 41). Despite its age and repeated stuffing, it is still in good condition, although the tail and primary tips are abraded. It stands on a modern chipboard mount and, in plate 41, its size can be gauged by the ball-point pen in the foreground. It may be noted that the bill colour is, in fact, wrong for adult Great Black-headed Gull, but close examination revealed that the base had been painted yellow. In his original description, Ross (1859) described the bare parts as follows: 'beak at its base vivid yellow, with a crimson ring-like spot near the tip, which is fuscous yellow; the feet fulvous red [*sic*]. When first obtained, the circles round the eyes were red.' The legs of the specimen now look as though they have been varnished.

The rejected records

TELSCOMBE CLIFFS, EAST SUSSEX, 4TH JANUARY 1910, AND HOVE, WEST SUSSEX, 9TH AUGUST 1932

Both these birds were seen by one of the great characters of British ornithology, John Walpole-Bond. The records are detailed in his book, *A History of Sussex Birds* (1938). From his account of the first one, it is clear that his views were brief. He mentions that it was a large gull with the outer primaries 'barred black and white', but the bill was not seen clearly, no head detail was noted and the legs 'seemed to be of a greenish hue'. The unanimous opinion of the BOURC was that the description was inadequate and that continued acceptance could not be justified. His second claim concerned a summer-plumaged adult which flew past Hove Promenade, but there is no description. Consequently, this record was also rejected. Some Committee members wondered whether Walpole-Bond may have misidentified a Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus*, itself a great rarity in those days. In order to leave no stone unturned, however, it was decided to try to track down Walpole-Bond's original diaries, and they were eventually located in a bank vault in Hampshire. Unfortunately, the manuscript accounts were no different from those already published in *A History of Sussex Birds*.

BOURNEMOUTH, DORSET, END OF NOVEMBER TO EARLY DECEMBER 1924

The account of this bird by the finder, W. Parkinson Curtis, can be found in *Brit. Birds* 19: 28-29. It frequented Poole Bay between Bournemouth Pier and Durley Chine and was fairly tame, but, unfortunately, there is no description.

CROMER, NORFOLK, 2ND-9TH MARCH 1932

This gull was seen almost daily by Henry Cole and was reported by B. B. Riviere in the 'Ornithological Report for Norfolk for 1932' (*Brit. Birds* 26: 392). He described it as being the size of a Herring Gull *L. argentatus* with an incomplete black hood. The bill was light orange with a bar and was much thicker at the tip than that of a Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*. The legs were yellow. The mantle was darker and the white on the primaries was 'more pronounced' than on Black-headed Gull. The Committee considered parts of this description were more convincing than those of the other rejected records, but, nevertheless, the possibility of a mistake could not be eliminated.

Conclusion

The Great Black-headed Gull has occurred in a number of northwest European countries, but the rejection of the four British records means that only two occurrences remain for northwest Europe during the first half of this century: Belgium (4th-23rd June 1936) and the Netherlands (16th June 1946). There are also later records from Sweden (12th September 1956 and 2nd June 1958) and records in the last ten years from Norway, Denmark, Germany and Poland. Two of the Polish records were in May and June and a well-documented Dutch record concerned a bird which initially appeared on 22nd June: an adult photographed in the IJsselmeer area in three consecutive summers during 1974-76 (van IJzendoorn 1989). Although the exact date of

40 & 41. Adult Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyæetus* shot off Exmouth, Devon, end of May or early June 1859, now in Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter. Note ball-point pen in lower photograph, showing scale
(Peter J. Hopkin)



the Devon bird is not known, an early-summer occurrence would appear to tie in with the established pattern.

At the time of writing, it has been 133 years since the Great Black-headed Gull was reliably reported in this country. How much longer must we wait for the second? Maybe we should check those midsummer gull flocks a little more closely.

Acknowledgments

We are extremely grateful to David Bolton at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, for allowing PJH access to the specimen and to Bryan Meloy for coming in specially on his day off to show it to him. It may be viewed at the Museum if arrangements are made well in advance (weekdays only). We are also grateful to T. A. Waddell and the Jourdain Society for their help with the Walpole-Bond diaries and to Dr Alan Knox for his useful comments on an earlier draft.

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 VAN IJZENDOORN, E. J. 1989. Reuzenzwartkopmeeuw in IJsselmeergebied in zomers van 1974-76. *Dutch Birding* 11: 5-8.

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BirdLife International news

Hydrological scheme threatens Ramsar site Lake Utonai on Hokkaido Island, Japan, a Ramsar site and host to thousands of wintering and migrating waterfowl, is threatened by a huge flood-relief scheme.

The planned scheme involves the construction of a canal 38.5 km long, which would take 20 years to build, is projected to cost at least £900 million, and would involve moving 120 million m³ of soil (180 million m³ were moved for the Panama Canal). In times of potential flooding, the canal would divert water out of the lower reaches of the Chitose River, which has flooded several times in the past few decades.

The canal would drastically reduce the amount of water flowing into Lake Utonai and would devastate its ecology. The Wild Bird Society of Japan, the BirdLife International partner in Japan, has been campaigning against the scheme, and pushing for an alternative, far-less-damaging scheme, which has been proposed, to be implemented.

GEORGINA GREEN

BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0XJ



From the Rarities Committee's files

Blackpoll Warbler in Shetland The following details were supplied to the Rarities Committee:

SPECIES Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*

AGE First-year(?)

PLACE Fair Isle, Shetland

DATE 30th September 1991

TIME From 13.30 GMT until evening; total 2½ hours (in two periods)

OBSERVER Mark I. Dowie

OTHER OBSERVERS Dave Suddaby; also seen well by Paul Harvey (Warden FIBO) and Nick Riddiford

FOUND AND IDENTIFIED BY Mark I. Dowie

TRAPPED No. PHOTOGRAPHED by Dennis Coutts (see plate 42)

OPTICAL AIDS Zeiss DIALYT 10 × 40, Nikon ED Fieldscope 30 ×

RANGE about 3 m

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE SPECIES UK: Scilly, three separate individuals; North America: New York Central Park, September 1990, many individuals (similar plumage).

WEATHER Cool, sunny, wind 3-4 northerly becoming still, bright sun, perfect clear conditions.

CIRCUMSTANCES Whilst searching for a Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* reported in the Springfield area, MID, DS and Tom Francis flushed a Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* from the crop at Busta; it flew towards a small vegetable patch next to the house at Busta and the three observers split up in an attempt to relocate the bunting. Suddenly, I noticed a small bird fly up from the ground to perch momentarily on the side of the front wall of the house. My attention was immediately drawn to the bright olive-green mantle, and two conspicuous white wing-bars, before the bird dropped to the grass amongst a small group of feeding Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*.

During this time, I was nonetheless able to point out the bird – clearly a warbler – to DS and we moved position to seek a better angle to view the pipit flock. My initial thoughts that the bird might be a Blackpoll Warbler were quickly confirmed as the mystery bird flew onto a nearby post, but, knowing that this species was one of a group of three American warblers with similar female/first-year plumages, my next priority was to eliminate any possibility of the two remaining confusion species. DS quickly relocated the warbler himself, and we were able to run through the various features that we could remember to confirm its identity. Close scrutiny of the leg/feet colour was sufficient to dispel thoughts of a rare congener, and I set about taking a full description.

TF, in the meantime, had noticed our actions and quickly hurried to the spot, and we were able to watch the bird at very close range as it continued to feed actively around the croft and outbuildings. The remaining birders on the island were summoned and all were able to enjoy this American vagrant as it performed well throughout the afternoon and into the early evening.

The last sighting was nearly four hours later, at 17.20 hours, by MID and Paul Harvey, Warden FIBO. We left the bird, still feeding actively on the wall surrounding the croft at Kenneby, but, despite appearing settled, it could not be relocated the following day.

DESCRIPTION (taken from field notes of MID)

Initial impression American warbler, seemingly larger and bulkier than, say,

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* or Willow Warbler *P. trochilus*, although no birds nearby, other than Meadow Pipits, for comparison. Main features included dull plumage overall but with rich olive-green back and two conspicuous white wing-bars. Typical stance horizontal or slightly down-angled (head down) with hunched back and 'no neck' appearance. Tail held slightly cocked and wings dropped down. Head held up when alert. Long rounded head.

Bare parts Bill black, appearing heavy and relatively short with wide base. Very dull reddish tone to base of bill. Eyes black. Legs brown (*not* black) with bright orange-yellow feet, onto lower legs. In direct sunlight, legs appeared orange.

Plumage Crown and nape dull olive-green, with very slight black flecking visible only at close range. Yellowish supercilium from bill to just behind eye, almost meeting above the bill. Open yellow face and ear-coverts. No 'eyestripe' as such, but slightly darker (green) behind the eye and just before the eye, but not joined to the bill, thus appearing rather pale-lored at a distance. Split yellow/whitish eye-ring.

Mantle rich olive-green, brighter than Meadow Pipit, well marked with a number of dark parallel lines, although less well marked on the lower back. Plain-looking rump, although certain uppertail-covert feathers appearing slightly dark-centred.

Pale lemon-yellow throat, slightly mottled, continuing down onto the lower breast, becoming a grey-green wash on the shoulders. Greeny spot mid breast. Fine grey streaking on upper breast, but appearing somewhat 'dirty' (extensive mottling almost). Two parallel rows of smudged grey feathering along the flanks, although rather indistinct pattern on grey-yellow wash.

White undertail-coverts. Tail black, all feathers with thin white edges. White tail 'spots' seen on the two outermost pairs of tail feathers were, in fact, discovered to be distorted, elongated 'triangles', difficult to see except when tail fanned; most obvious when about to land, flying away from the observer. Undertail (closed) appeared mostly white.

Scapulars rich olive-green, the lower row(s) being black-centred. Lesser coverts dark-centred with greenish edges. Median coverts black-centred with all-round broad white edging, the lower edge forming a thick, curving white wing-bar. Greater coverts black-centred; outer web green, tinged whitish, becoming white at lower end to form a second thick white wing-bar across the wing, also curved and running parallel with the first. Wing-bar slightly broader on inner coverts.

Secondaries and primaries moss-green edged, forming a slight panel on the closed wing. Tertiaries black with thick white border to the outer edge. Primaries white-tipped, and equally spaced, with projection approximately equal to that of exposed tertiaries.

Voice Soft, weak 'tsic', heard on many occasions.

Actions Constantly on view in the open. Confiding, approachable down to a few yards. Spent most of afternoon working along the stone walls surrounding the crofted areas around Kenneby. Very active, seen 'flycatching' on many occasions off the sides of the crofts and outhouses, and from the wire fencing and stone walls nearby. Active feeding, both on the ground and along the stone walls. Nervous tail flicking. Many short flights, during which time tail 'spots' apparent.



42. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1991 (Dennis Coultts)

CONFUSION SPECIES IN AUTUMN

Blackpoll Warbler is similar (in female-type/immature plumage) in autumn to (i) Pine Warbler *D. pinus*, and (ii) Bay-breasted Warbler *D. castanea*. These species can be eliminated on the grounds of:

(a) leg coloration brown, with orange-yellow feet (compared with black on Pine and Bay-breasted). Note: legs of Blackpoll typically straw-coloured, but autumn birds can show darker legs, but never black.

(b) upperparts heavily marked (compared with uniform back on Pine).

(c) throat and breast/flanks lemon and lemon-yellow (compared with whitish throat and buffish-yellow breast/flanks on Bay-breasted, and also buff to bright yellow breast/flanks on Pine).

(d) undertail-coverts white (compared with buff on Bay-breasted).

DISCUSSION

This bird was the first North American passerine reported in Shetland for the autumn. Previous days had seen a Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tyngites subruficollis* (26th) and Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (27th) located on Fair Isle. Strong westerly winds originating from the northeastern seaboard of North America the week before, and the following general winds on Fair Isle: 25th W; 26th NW; 27th NW; 28th NE; 29th E/NE; 30th N.

Is it possible that the Blackpoll drifted south off mainland Shetland on predominantly northerly winds?

This constitutes the first record for Fair Isle and only the third for Shetland.

MARK I. DOWIE

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Peter Lansdown (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) has commented as follows: 'Mark Dowie's report on the Blackpoll Warbler on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 30th September 1991 received several compliments from the BBRC members during its circulation. Except for minor editorial amendments, the report appears exactly as it was received by the Committee.

'Though Blackpoll Warbler is not a difficult species to identify in a British context, Mark Dowie has provided full and detailed documentation. It includes a BBRC Record Form with all of the relevant parts of the front of the form duly completed (additional information not applicable to this record concerns seawatching records, dead birds and trapped birds), a comprehensive description covering general appearance, size and structure, plumage and bare parts, voice and behaviour, and an account of the circumstances of the sighting. The report was submitted in November 1991 to the Fair Isle Bird Observatory warden, who forwarded it to the Rarities Committee.

'The Committee is always pleased to see a well-researched record submission, and Mark Dowie's careful consideration of confusion species is a prime example of this. Future rarity-finders would be well advised to follow the general approach, style and content of Mark's Blackpoll Warbler report.' EDS



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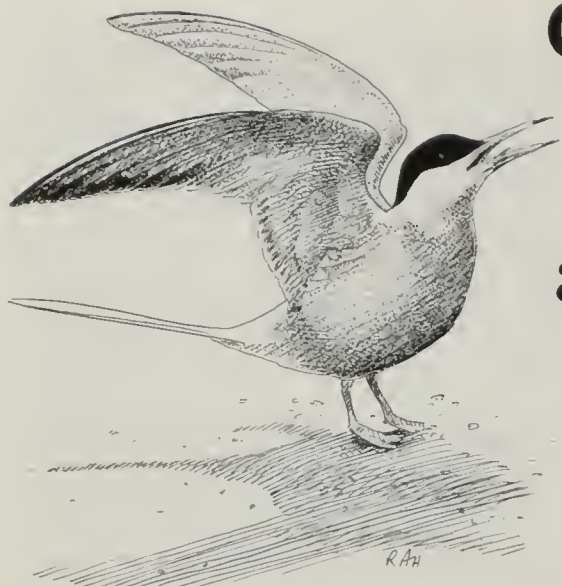
'A British Trust for Ornithology scheme to map the distributions of British and Irish breeding birds is outlined in the latest issue of *B.T.O. News*. The intrinsic interest and long-term values of such an ornithological atlas are obvious; what would we give for an atlas of bird breeding distribution for 1870, and how useful a comprehensive 1970 survey will be to our great-grandchildren in 2070.'

'The Wildfowl Trust has completed the outright purchase of 400 acres of marshland in the Welney Washes, on the Cambridgeshire/Norfolk border, as well as the shooting rights over an adjacent 100 acres. This promises to be one of the most important wildfowl refuges in western Europe.'

'Fair Isle Bird Observatory . . . may well receive a boost. The island's old airstrip has been cleared, and a new one is to be built; the firm of Loganair, of Kirkwall Airport, Orkney, is available for charter flights to the island . . . the flight from Kirkwall to Fair Isle (which takes 30 minutes) will cost approximately five guineas return.' (*Brit. Birds* 61: 237-239, May 1968)

Also in May 1968, a Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* at St Ives, Cornwall, on 31st was greeted as the twelfth British record and the first since 1926, while five Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* at Minsmere, Suffolk, on 23rd were regarded as likely to be the prelude to imminent breeding in eastern England.

Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns: an identification review



R. A. Hume

Turner, in 1544, referred to 'a Larus' and called it 'stern', apparently the Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. Willughby, in 1678, referred to the terns as 'the least sort of gull, having a forked tail'. Gesner (1516-1565) referred to three terns in the genus *Larus* as well as gulls, and in 1662 Sir Thomas Browne wrote of 'Lari, seamews and cobs' in Norfolk, including *Larus cinereus*, apparently the Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, commonly called sterne, but also of the '*Hirundo marina*' or sea-swallowe, a bird much larger than a Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, neat, white and fork-tailed.

The confusion with gulls continued for many years; indeed, it still does. In the *General Synopsis*, 1781, Latham knew the Common Tern well enough to publish an accurate plumage description, but he did not recognise Arctic *S. paradisaea*, Roseate *S. dougalli* and Sandwich Terns *S. sandwicensis*. Brünnich, however, had described the Arctic Tern as a separate species in 1764, despite Henry Seebohm's later assertion that the distinction was not made until 1819.

Montagu did not mention Arctic Tern in his 1802 *Dictionary of British Birds*, although he was good enough to distinguish difficult pairs such as Hen *Circus cyaneus* and Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus*. Linnaeus, in 1758, made no mention of the Arctic Tern either, although it is likely that the bird he described under the name *Sterna hirundo hirundo* was actually a specimen of an Arctic, not a Common Tern.

The identification of Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns in the field still presents a challenge. Many people stick too easily to 'commie tern' in their notebooks. It is a pity that the names lend themselves so well to such shorthand, but even those who try harder often struggle. Quite rightly, too, on occasion, as the terns are difficult and sometimes impossible; but given a good enough view they should not be.

Publication of this review paper is timed to coincide with the launch later this month by Hamlyn of a major new series of bird monographs, including *The Common Tern* by R. A. Hume and *The Kestrel* by Mike Shrubbs. Fig. 1 is published in colour courtesy of Hamlyn. *British Birds* subscribers have the opportunity to obtain all the books in this new series at EXCLUSIVE reduced prices.

The willingness to avoid identification was largely a fault of poor guide books until the 1970s and early 1980s. The hard work had been done long before, but field guides failed to pass on advances. For years the separation of Common from Arctic rested on correct but difficult features such as leg length and bill colour. A flying tern at long range, or against the light, rarely gives a chance to judge such things; if it perched, perhaps the relative length of tail and wingtips would help.

As for young ones, and winter adults, nothing helpful was offered by guides, although there were clues in detailed works such as *The Handbook of British Birds* by H. F. Witherby and his team.

John Walpole-Bond, in his review of the birds of Sussex, reminded us that these terns were 'damnably difficult' in the field. T. A. Coward, in *The Birds of the British Isles and their Eggs*, in 1920, mentioned differences in bill colour, but stressed that the pair was tricky in the field although generally easily separated in the hand. The safest feature was the pattern of grey and white on the outer primary.

It was Richard Richardson who began to see better ways of telling Common from Arctic when they were flying overhead. 'RAR' lived and birdwatched at Cley from 1940, perfect for a tern-watcher. In 1953, he published a note in *British Birds* (46: 411-412) in which he credited Mr Gordon Rayner for drawing to his attention a character 'widely used by observers in Scandinavia and the Low Countries' but overlooked in Britain. The dark tips under the outer primaries make a different pattern on Common compared with Arctic, and on Arctic Tern the feathers look pale and translucent; on Common, only the innermost four primaries look like that, making a distinctive light patch behind the bend of the wing. An editorial comment said that 'even in this country, this difference has long been used by some' but queried whether it was 100% reliable (Richardson knew it was).

Collins Pocket Guide to British Birds by Fitter & Richardson, in 1952, gave the usual summary of field marks. Only later editions included a good, complete discussion of identification features, including differences in underwing pattern and translucency noted by Richardson. His paintings in the guide, prepared before 1952, do nothing to show them.

A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe by Peterson, Mountfort & Holom (1954) did not include Richardson's points. Birdwatchers without *BB* had to wait for later editions of this and the *Pocket Guide* to see them. Later editions of the *Field Guide* managed a good summary of identification points for adult terns, but again missed the opportunity properly to illustrate the underwings. In 1972, Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow published *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* and made a stab at showing the proper pattern. In America, the Peterson guide, *A Field Guide to the Birds*, did not include the wing patterns until the revised version of 1980.

The importance of the upperwings had been overlooked in attempts to get the underwing right. Actually, all was there to see in *Sea Terns or Sea Swallows* by George & Anne Marples, published in 1934, complete with good photographs of specimens, and, even in *A British Bird Book* by Kirkman (1912), illustrations by A. W. Seaby and G. E. Lodge showed the upperwing differences (and underwing of Roseate) perfectly, but without anyone noticing their value.

Fig. 1. Roseate *Sterna dougalli*, Arctic *S. paradisaea* and Common Terns *S. hirundo* (Norman Arlott)

ADULT SUMMER ROSEATE TERN (top): largely black bill (red base later in summer, inset right), pale body, dark outer primaries (black outer web of longest can be striking) with white tips to inner webs; very long tail projecting beyond short wings.

ADULT SUMMER ARCTIC TERN (second from top): all-red bill, all-pale primaries, tail extending beyond wingtips; greyer underbody and short legs.

ADULT SUMMER COMMON TERN (middle): black-tipped bill, contrast between inner and outer primaries, shorter tail, longer legs than Arctic. Inset head (left) shows black-billed eastern race *longipennis*.

WINTER COMMON TERN (second from bottom): blacker bill with red base, white forehead.

JUVENILE COMMON TERN (bottom): scaly upperparts with gingery wash; blackish lesser coverts; gingery wash to white forehead; pinkish bill.

In the late 1960s, I noticed differences and wrote a note to *BB*, naively thinking I was onto something new, to be told by the editor, Pat Bonham, that he and others had been using these marks for years. It was a response like the editors' comment to Richardson's 1953 note.

The late Peter Grant, already responsible for working out the identification of juveniles, was nevertheless very interested and typically encouraging (and if that's so, he said, why didn't they tell anyone?). Between us we drafted a paper, published in *British Birds* (67: 133-136) in 1974. Meanwhile, Bonham had been more thorough and found references to the same pattern by J.-P. Vande Weghe, in *Aves* of 1966. So much for being first with anything.

Overlooked for years, Vande Weghe's characters provided a new way to pick out Common from Arctic Terns: the infinitely difficult pair suddenly became quite easy at very long range; sometimes.

Field guides were slow to catch on. Lars Jonsson at last showed the way with fine illustrations in *Birds of Sea and Coast* in 1977 (English translation 1978). Otherwise, few showed upperwing differences.

At the same time, Roseate Tern caused confusion, too often described as exceptionally elegant and graceful. In fact, despite long tail streamers, it has relatively short wings, and bats along at speed almost like a Little Tern *S. albigrons*. Its direct flight is less elegant, easy and graceful than that of either Common or Arctic.

Of juveniles, nothing much was said. The great Witherby *Handbook* had adequate descriptions but little on field marks. Once the underwings were sorted out by Richardson, juveniles became easier. Poor illustrations—the *Handbook* gives young Roseate orange-yellow legs for example—added to the confusion.

Then, in 1969, along came Bob Scott and Peter Grant to write a breakthrough paper on field identification of young Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns, published in *British Birds* (62: 297-299).

Other aspects of terns helped in identification. Peter Grant pointed out the importance of differing moult cycles. An adult Common or Arctic, in August or September, with its inner primaries in moult and gaps in the secondaries, has to be Common. Ragged-winged terns, with straggly tails and even white foreheads in late summer and autumn, became obvious Commons, because Arctics did not begin to moult until they were in winter quarters.

Fig. 1. is taken from *The Common Tern* by Rob Hume, and its inclusion in colour in *British Birds* has been sponsored by the book's publisher, Hamlyn



Roseate



Arctic



Common
longipennis



Roseate
(late summer)



Common



Common
(winter)



Common
(juvenile)

Descriptions

Adults

HEAD AND BODY

Adults have jet-black cap, complete in breeding plumage, but with white forehead in winter. The white line between cap and gape is broader on Common than on Arctic. Roseate has a more domed head, the cap angled down onto the hindneck, often exaggerated by a more upright stance. Even in flight, Roseate sometimes has an appreciably broader, rounder look to the head.

The upperside of Common and Arctic is soft, pale grey; *Roseate is paler*. The rump of adult Common is white, faintly suffused with grey in winter; on Arctic it is white. The cheeks are white, blending into the greyer underside of the body. *On Arctic, the grey is a touch darker*, the white cheeks a fraction more contrasting. This 'white streak' effect can be obvious, but a lot depends on the light. The underside of Common is soft pale grey, sometimes with a pinkish or lilac tinge; on Arctic it is smokier grey, whereas Roseate is *nearly white*, more or less tinged pink, below. The whiteness is particularly marked (and useful) at rest.



Fig. 2. Diagram of uppersides of (left to right) Arctic *Sterna paradisaea*, Common *S. hirundo* and Roseate Terns *S. dougalli*. Note: ARCTIC short bill, round head, short neck and pale primaries; COMMON longer bill and neck, dark streaks on outer primaries; ROSEATE paler appearance, blacker bill, short dark streaks on wingtip (R. A. Hume)

UPPERWING

The four or five inner primaries of Common are pale grey with white tips. The outer five or six have a pale grey bloom, which wears away to reveal blackish barbs beneath. The shafts are thick, stiff and white; the outer webs blackish. The outer two feathers are less black on the inner webs than the next few. As the feathers get older, the pale bloom wears off and the overlapping parts become progressively blacker. On Arctic the primaries are *more uniform* above, often with a paler effect towards the tip.

Common moults its primaries, starting with the innermost in early autumn, as early as late July (more rarely even at the end of May). The inner three or



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four are replaced before autumn migration. Some secondaries and coverts are shed, producing a ragged line of white across the upperwing and an uneven trailing edge. The tail is partially moulted, too. The outer primary feathers remain unchanged, to be replaced in winter. For a time, in winter, the whole outer primary area looks pale and silvery.

In the following spring, before the migration north, the inner feathers are replaced again. A Common Tern reaching Europe in spring has new inner primaries of pearly grey and older outer ones, which can look contrastingly dark. The oldest feather in the middle contrasts most strongly with the new, pale ones, making a *small, grey wedge or notch effect*. By autumn, the *outer primary feathers are worn and much blacker*, while the inner ones remain pale.

On Arctic, the primaries are all of similar colour, the outer ones lacking most of the underlying black. If anything, Arctic looks paler towards the wingtip, adding to its physical lightness. All the primaries are replaced late in the year, after migration (so autumn birds in western Europe look neat and pale). In spring there is *no contrast between inner and outer primaries* and they all remain pale *through the summer and autumn*.

At rest, the pale inner/darker outer primaries contrast is obvious on Common (just beyond the tertials) whereas there is no such contrast on Arctic.

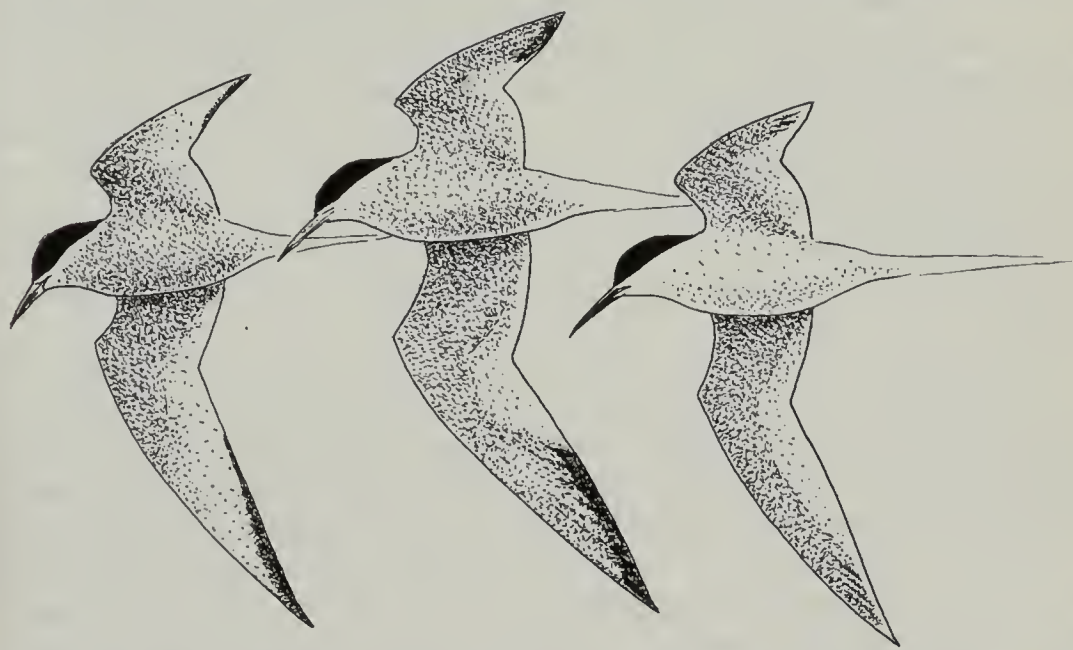


Fig. 3. Diagram of undersides of (left to right) Arctic *Sterna paradisaea*, Common *S. hirundo* and Roseate Terns *S. dougalli*. Note: ARCTIC grey body, very pale underside of (translucent) primaries with narrow, tapered dark trailing edge; COMMON broader, dusky trailing edge to opaque outer primaries, cut off square against translucent inner ones; ROSEATE very pale body, pale trailing edge to dark-streaked outer primaries (R. A. Hume)

UNDERWING

The broad, dark, *smudgy* trailing edge on the outer five or six primaries of Common is *cut off square*. On Arctic, a thinner, *crisper line tapers inwards* along the outer seven feathers. Roseate has subterminal dark marks on the outer feathers, but the extreme *tips of all the primaries are white*.

All the primaries and secondaries on Arctic look semi-transparent against a bright sky. On Common, *only the inner four* make a paler patch against the

opaque outer secondaries and outer primaries. This is often obvious on a bird flying overhead, but also on a bird flying low against the light. Beware the bird overhead with the underwing lit strongly by the sun: the primaries look bright white and will be 'translucent' only if at least some light is coming through from behind. On Roseate, the outer primaries make a *long opaque wedge*, the rest and outer secondaries being semi-translucent.

BARE PARTS

In spring, adult Common has a bright *orange-red bill* with a black or brownish tip. Its legs are vivid red. Arctic has deep red legs and a *blood-red* or deep scarlet bill, with no black tip. In summer, some Commons have little black (and rarely-seen presumed immatures may have blackish bills), but the difference holds good in 99 cases out of 100. The orange-red is distinctly different from the deep red of Arctic. Roseate has a *black bill*, dark red at the base in spring; by late summer, half, even two-thirds, becomes *rich orange-red*, leaving a large black tip reminiscent of Common. The bill of Common is rather stout and long; that of Arctic shorter, deeper-based but sharp-tipped.

JUVENILES

Juveniles are sometimes easier to tell apart than adults. Commons share their parents' slightly heavier, broader appearance compared with Arctics, but all young terns have shorter, rounder wings than adults, and are consequently quicker, more flappy, in flight. Commons look grey, white and black, with more or less of a gingery-brown tinge on top. Young Arctics, although marked heavily with scaly crescents above, look *purer grey and white* at a distance. Young Roseates have dark foreheads and very scaly upperparts, with a contrast between dark forewing and outer primaries and paler hindwing triangle.

Very young Commons have fleshy-pink (even orange-yellow) bills with dark tips, which darken to black-brown with less pale red at the base (even virtually all-black on a few by September). The legs are dull pinkish-red or yellow-orange. Arctics have effectively *black bills*, with a little fleshy-red at the base at first, and red or dark brown legs. The bill colour is usually a good feature.

Both have white foreheads and black on the crown, nape and down the sides of the head in a neat three-lobed cap. Common has a brown or gingery tinge over the forehead, making it less clean than Arctic, although this quickly wears off. The rump of a young Common is *pale grey* in the centre. On Arctic it is dead white.

The underwings are like those of the adults. Above, the Common has the leading edge of the inner wing almost blackish. The rest of the wing-coverts are paler, the greater coverts (along the midwing or just behind) milky-grey. The secondaries are darker grey with white tips, forming a *grey band across the hindwing*.

On Arctic, the upperwing is essentially dark at the front, grey in the middle and *white at the back*, as the inner primaries and secondaries are the palest grey with broad white tips. There is no grey band across the hindwing, but instead a long triangle of white. Young Arctics, like adults, are also lighter, smaller, more delicate than young Commons, usually the smallest and faintest of all.

Roseates at this age are more coarsely marked on top, have *dark foreheads*

with little or no real white, and *black legs*. Like adults, their primaries seen from underneath have a dusky line towards the tip, but the tips of the feathers themselves are see-through white and there is *no black trailing edge*.

IMMATURES

The moult of immature terns is complicated. By the first mid winter the outer wing feathers of Common are worn and six or eight months old. From about January to July, the flight feathers are slowly replaced, so the outer ones look almost black between February and June while the inner ones look neat and pale in first-summer plumage.

Immatures still not in breeding condition in second-summer—in the third calendar year of their life—are variable. Some look much like the first-summer, but without the blacker outer primaries, sometimes with more red on the bill, others are more advanced with adult-like plumage except for whiter underparts and some white on the forehead. A few look just like adults, but are almost white below and may have dark bills.

FLIGHT AND BEHAVIOUR

Commons look elegant and light yet, by comparison, they are heavy and solid next to an Arctic. Roseates are more stable, relatively fast and direct.

Arctics are bright and white-winged, delicate and supremely free in the air. Their long wings are tweaked to a narrow tip, a fine point with a hint of a backward curve. Commons' wings are more triangular, a touch broader. Common Tern has a bigger, longer head on a longer neck; on Arctic Tern, the bill is a fraction shorter, *the head rounder, the neck short and thick* and the tail streamers are longer when fresh and undamaged. Consequently, Common has *more in front and less behind than Arctic*, which is all wings and tail with the body blending directly into the short head. Common has longer arms, whereas Arctic looks *shorter in the arm* but longer in the wingtip, less cruciform in shape.

Common Terns are stable and direct in flight; Arctic is more bouncy and at the mercy of the wind. Common has a fast, powerful downstroke but a faintly lumbering look. Arctic is fluttery, butterfly-like, with a quick, snapped upstroke and a slower downbeat—it is *easier to see the downstroke than the upbeat on Arctic* instead of the other way around.

The shorter-winged Roseate has a *stiffer action*, upstrokes and downstrokes of equal speed and emphasis. Its bill is long, head short and quite domed, wings rather *short and straight and tail very long, spike-like*, the whole effect almost like a tiny tropicbird *Phaethon*.

The three behave slightly differently when fishing. Typically, Commons fly along, looking down, then swoop gently upwards, turn back slightly and plunge in. Arctic is *more hesitant* and hovers, moves, hovers, then dips, pauses part-way through the dive, hovers momentarily again, then plunges. Roseate has a more confident method, flying along, seeing a fish and simply turning downhill to 'fly into the water'.

R. A. Hume, 15 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1ET

A series of reference photographs by Dr R. J. Chandler of these three species will be featured in a future issue. EDS



Mystery photographs

188 In each of last month's mystery photographs (plates 36 & 37, repeated here), the bulky bird with the white wing-flashes is the same individual. Like the author, readers will be relieved to learn that this is the mystery bird, and that they were not expected to identify the small, dark shapes, which are storm-petrels (*Hydrobatidae*).



In combination, the robust structure and those conspicuous white bases to the primaries, both above and below, point directly to one of the larger skuas *Stercorarius*, of which two species have occurred in the Western Palearctic: the familiar Great Skua *S. skua* and the rare and problematical South Polar Skua *S. maccormicki*. The smaller Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus* and Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus*, with their obviously more rakish and streamlined build, can be discounted immediately, whilst both they and the intermediate Pomarine Skua *S. pomarinus* do not possess such striking wing-flashes as the mystery bird, particularly on the upperwings.

Even in direct comparison, Great and South Polar Skuas cannot be separated in the field on size or on any structural character (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 176-177). Furthermore, bare-part coloration is of no assistance in the identification process, and neither is the extremely variable extent of the white on the base of the primaries. Ignoring these features, the mystery skua is most notable for its pale head with a dark area around the eye, its even paler nape, and its

generally pale underbody which contrasts against very dark axillaries and underwing-coverts. These are good characters for adult South Polar Skua. Unfortunately, even in combination, they do not eliminate adult Great Skua.

South Polar Skua has generally unmarked, cold-toned, dark brown upperparts. A number of paler-morph individuals have pale shaft-streaks and slender, pale tips to the scapulars and, more rarely, to the upperwing-coverts. These markings are too fine to be seen in the field other than in exceptionally close views. The feathers of the upper mantle and, very occasionally, the marginal coverts and the lesser coverts have broader, pale tips which, on these smaller feathers, produce a pale-mottled appearance which is visible in the field.

Great Skua has generally warm-toned upperparts which are streaked and mottled paler to a variable degree. Some adults are particularly liberally marked on the mantle, back, rump, scapulars, upperwing-coverts and, especially, the nape. There is a direct relationship between Great Skua's pale upperparts markings and its paleness below: those individuals with the palest underparts also have the most strongly pale-streaked and pale-mottled upperparts.

The most important factor in the separation of South Polar and Great Skuas is, therefore, the observation of both the upperparts and the underparts. Though the mystery skua has very pale underparts, which are suggestive of South Polar Skua, the abundant pale markings on its upperparts, particularly on its scapulars, confirm that it is a Great Skua. The photographs were taken in the southerly Western Approaches in early July 1991 by Andy Webb, of the Seabirds Team, who was in no doubt that the bird was a Great Skua. Andy Webb saw two similarly pale individuals in the same area in late August 1991.

PETER LANSDOWN

197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG

45. Mystery photograph 189. Identify the species. Answer next month





Notes

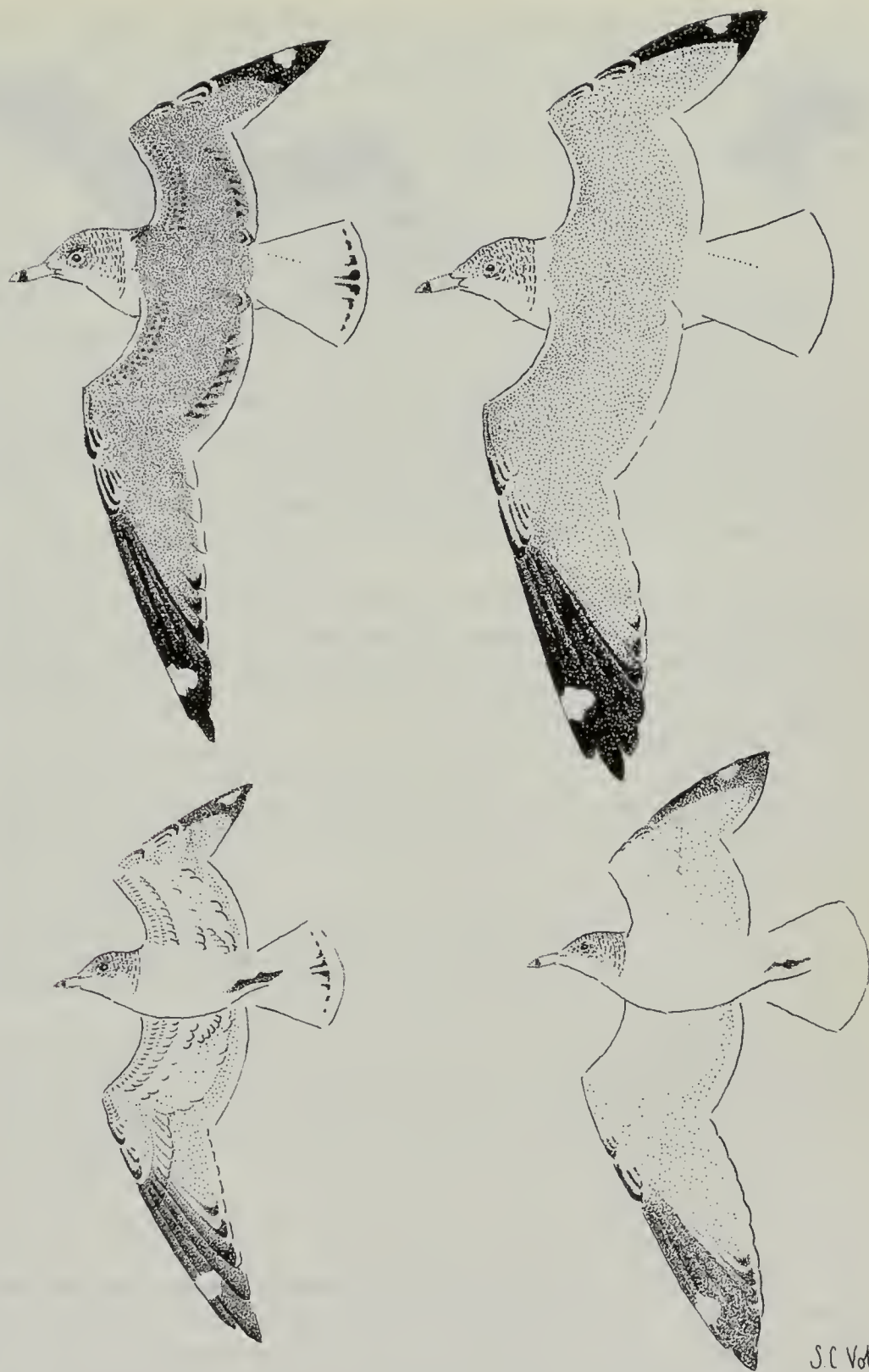
Common Gull showing characteristics apparently consistent with North American race The North Norfolk coast is excellent for observing gulls, with strong passages of the commoner species occurring frequently throughout the year. Being gull enthusiasts, we both critically examine tens of thousands of Common Gulls *Larus canus* of the nominate race annually and consider ourselves to be extremely familiar with all variations in plumage, size and structure of this subspecies.

During one such westerly movement of Common Gulls, at Sheringham on 28th December 1991, our attention was instantly drawn to a most odd-looking second-winter bird. It came in from the east and flew slowly past us at a range of only about 40 m. We were standing on a cliff-top vantage point; at first it was flying just higher than cliff-top level, then just lower, giving excellent, close views, in perfect light, of both its underside and its upperside. It was clearly in second-winter plumage, but differed markedly from typical second-winter *canus* in the following respects:

- (1) Axillaries, greater, median and lesser underwing-coverts, and median and lesser under-primary coverts, with extensive and obvious brown fringing and tipping. (All these feathers are unmarked white on *canus*.)
- (2) Like *canus*, extensive blackish-brown on outer primaries, greater primary coverts, median primary coverts and alula, but, unlike *canus*, blue-grey lesser coverts, median coverts, secondaries and tertials also had extensive brown markings. Thus, the only feather-tracts of clear blue-grey on upperparts were the mantle, back, scapulars, greater coverts and inner primaries.
- (3) Most tail feathers with obvious, blackish-brown, subterminal markings, forming broken sub-terminal tail-band, widest in centre of tail and becoming narrower towards white outer tail feathers. (Only a small percentage of *canus* exhibit this feature.)
- (4) Clear blue-grey on upperparts was noticeably darker than on *canus* and, because of this, the white trailing edge to the upperwing appeared to be more obvious.
- (5) Differed markedly from *canus* in size and structure: noticeably smaller and daintier than *canus* in all respects, but particularly different in wing structure. Unlike the rather paddle-shaped outer wing (beyond the carpal joint) of *canus*, the outer wing was sharper and more attenuated, giving the whole bird a strikingly different jizz. We noted no difference from *canus* in head and bill size and structure.

To summarise these differences, the bird clearly showed considerable retention of first-year characteristics in second-winter plumage, had darker blue-grey upperparts and was noticeably different in size and structure from *canus*. We have attempted to illustrate these features in fig. 1.

We were aware of the existence of other races of Common Gull and, the bird being so strikingly different from *canus*, concluded that it must be one of these. We therefore recorded the notes above and spent the rest of the day confirming our impressions by critically examining the good number of second-winter *canus* continuing to pass through.



S. C. Volter

Fig. 1. Second-winter Common Gull *Larus canus*, possibly of race *brachyrhynchus*, Sheringham, Norfolk, 28th December 1991 (left two sketches), and typical second-winter Common Gull of nominate race (*S. C. Volter*)

We returned to investigate the literature, consulting Cramp (1983), Dementiev & Gladkov (1969), Grant (1986), Harrison (1983) and Johansen (1961). Four races of Common Gull are recognised (*brachyrhynchus*, *canus*, *heinei* and *kamtschatschensis*), their breeding and wintering ranges being shown in fig. 2.



Fig. 2. World distribution of Common Gull *Larus canus*, showing approximate breeding range (solid black) and approximate southern limit of winter/non-breeding range (black line). The dotted lines indicate the approximate breeding ranges of the subspecies. (A) *L. c. brachyrhynchus*; (B) *L. c. canus*; (C) *L. c. heinei*; (D) *L. c. kamtschatschensis*.

Reproduced from Grant 1986, by permission of the publishers, T. & A. D. Poyser)

The features of the unusual Sheringham bird accord with these as follows:

(1) *Retention of first-year characteristics in second-winter plumage.* The extensive retention of first-year characteristics (i.e. the combination of upperwing, underwing and tail features) noted on the Norfolk bird is apparently known only for *brachyrhynchus* and *kamtschatschensis*. It has never been recorded for *canus* and is not documented for *heinei*.

(2) *Mantle colour.* There is some disagreement in the literature on the relative mantle colours of the four races. Grant (1986) and Cramp (1983) suggested that *brachyrhynchus* has a similar mantle colour to *canus*, *kamtschatschensis* averages darker and *heinei* is darkest of all. Harrison (1983) and Dementiev & Gladkov (1969), however, both stated that the mantle colour of *brachyrhynchus* is clearly darker than that of *canus*.

(3) *General size and bill size.* General size and bill size both increase from *brachyrhynchus* to *canus* to *heinei* to *kamtschatschensis*. On average, *brachyrhynchus* is slightly smaller (with some individuals having slightly smaller bills) than *canus*; *heinei* is large (averaging between *canus* and *kamtschatschensis*) and is often large-billed; and *kamtschatschensis* is the largest of the four, with a consistently large bill, the largest individuals overlapping with small Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*.

There are other plumage differences shown by second-winter *brachyrhynchus* in comparison with *canus* which, if the bird exhibited them, we failed to notice. Head markings are apparently more diffuse, giving a more uniform grey-brown head (*canus* is more darkly mottled and streaked, thus being less uniform), and the iris is sometimes pale (brown in the case of *canus*). Not knowing what to look for, we failed to note any details of head plumage or iris colour.

The literature consulted suggests, therefore, that the bird was an example of the North American race *brachyrhynchus*. Its plumage features were apparently consistent only with *brachyrhynchus* and *kamtschatschensis* and, being noticeably smaller than *canus*, could not possibly have been an example of the consistently larger and larger-billed *kamtschatschensis*. We found the disagreement in the literature on the mantle colour frustrating, as the Norfolk bird clearly did have a darker mantle. To try to clarify this, we examined a series of skins of all four races at the Natural History Museum in Tring. Our examination of these suggested that *brachyrhynchus* is darker-mantled than *canus*. We directly compared eight adult and two second-winter *brachyrhynchus* with 38 adult/second-winter *canus*. The darkest *canus* was indistinguishable from one of the *brachyrhynchus*, but the remaining *brachyrhynchus* were darker, the darkest

individual being noticeably darker than the darkest *canus*. As clearly stated by Harrison (1983) and Dementiev & Gladkov (1969), the mantle colour of *brachyrhynchus* certainly can be darker than that of *canus*.

We also took the opportunity to compare skins of second-winter birds of all four races in the collection. Although there were only a few of these (there were two *brachyrhynchus*, several *canus*, four *heinei* and two *kamtschatschensis*), they supported the published identification criteria, and the Norfolk bird was clearly akin to the examples of *brachyrhynchus*.

On the available evidence, the Norfolk bird showed a combination of characteristics apparently consistent only with *brachyrhynchus*. Until the full range of plumage variation of the lesser-known races is more fully understood, it would, however, be foolish to say with 100% certainty that the Norfolk bird was of North American stock. This note aims to draw attention to the fact that *brachyrhynchus* may be reaching us in small numbers, especially since some authorities consider it to be a separate species—the Mew Gull *L. brachyrhynchus*. Features of first-year and adult *brachyrhynchus* were also described in some detail by Grant (1986).

We are extremely grateful to the Natural History Museum in Tring, Hertfordshire, for allowing us to examine its collection of Common Gull skins and in particular to Michael Walters, who supervised our visit with much useful help and discussion.

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30 Abbey Road, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8NN

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Since it was not submitted as a firm claim of the occurrence of *L. c. brachyrhynchus*, details of this observation have not circulated to the Rarities Committee or the BOU Records Committee. Currently, only the nominate race of Common Gull is included on the official British List (*Checklist of Birds of Britain and Ireland*, 1992), but the race *heinei* may reach Britain in autumn and winter (*Brit. Birds* 78: 454). EDS

Oystercatcher chick probably killed by rival adult On 12th June 1990, at the British Gas Terminal at St Fergus, Rattray Bay, Grampian, I came across two pairs of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* involved in what appeared to be a noisy territorial dispute. Closer observation revealed a dead Oystercatcher chick, aged perhaps three days, as the cause of the commotion. One member of pair A was attacking the dead chick, and was seen to peck and shake it vigorously; one of pair B responded by in turn attacking this adult, and a prolonged and savage battle followed until one of the Oystercatchers was forced into submission, though it was impossible to be sure which individual it was (plates 46-50). After the fight, I inspected the dead chick: it was still warm and had apparently died from a blow to the back. It seems

likely that it was killed by one of the adult Oystercatchers; a surrounding security fence prevents any mammalian predators from entering the area, and there is little human disturbance.

DAVID TOMLINSON

Windrush, Coles Lane, Brasted, Westerham, Kent TN16 1XV



46-50. Sequence of battle between two adult Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Grampian, June 1990; the dead chick is visible in the foreground in plate 46 (David Tomlinson)







Monthly marathon

The winner of the fifth 'Monthly marathon' is Hannu Jännes, who was the only contestant to achieve the 21-in-a-row all-correct sequence shown opposite. Congratulations to Hannu, who can now choose as his reward a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Asia, Africa or North America.

We pass our commiserations, however, to Roy Hargreaves and Dave Nurney, each of whom achieved 20-in-a-row sequences (double the minimum requirement to qualify as a winner), but were pipped at the post by Hannu Jännes.

Previous winners have been:

First 'Marathon' PEKKA NIKANDER Trip to Thailand (*Brit. Birds* 80: 342-343; 81: 516)

Second 'Marathon' ANTHONY MCGEEHAN Trip to Arctic Canada (*Brit. Birds* 81: 494-496, 605-606)

Third 'Marathon' RAY HOBBS Trip to Kenya (*Brit. Birds* 82: 570-571; 84: 240)

Fourth 'Marathon' MARTIN HELIN Trip to Hong Kong (*Brit. Birds* 83: 414-415)

The new rules (*Brit. Birds* 86: 149) now apply. The closing date for entries for the first three hurdles (plates 18, 32 and 38) is 15th May 1993, so you may still have a day or so to get your entry in if you are quick. The fourth hurdle is represented by plate 51, below.

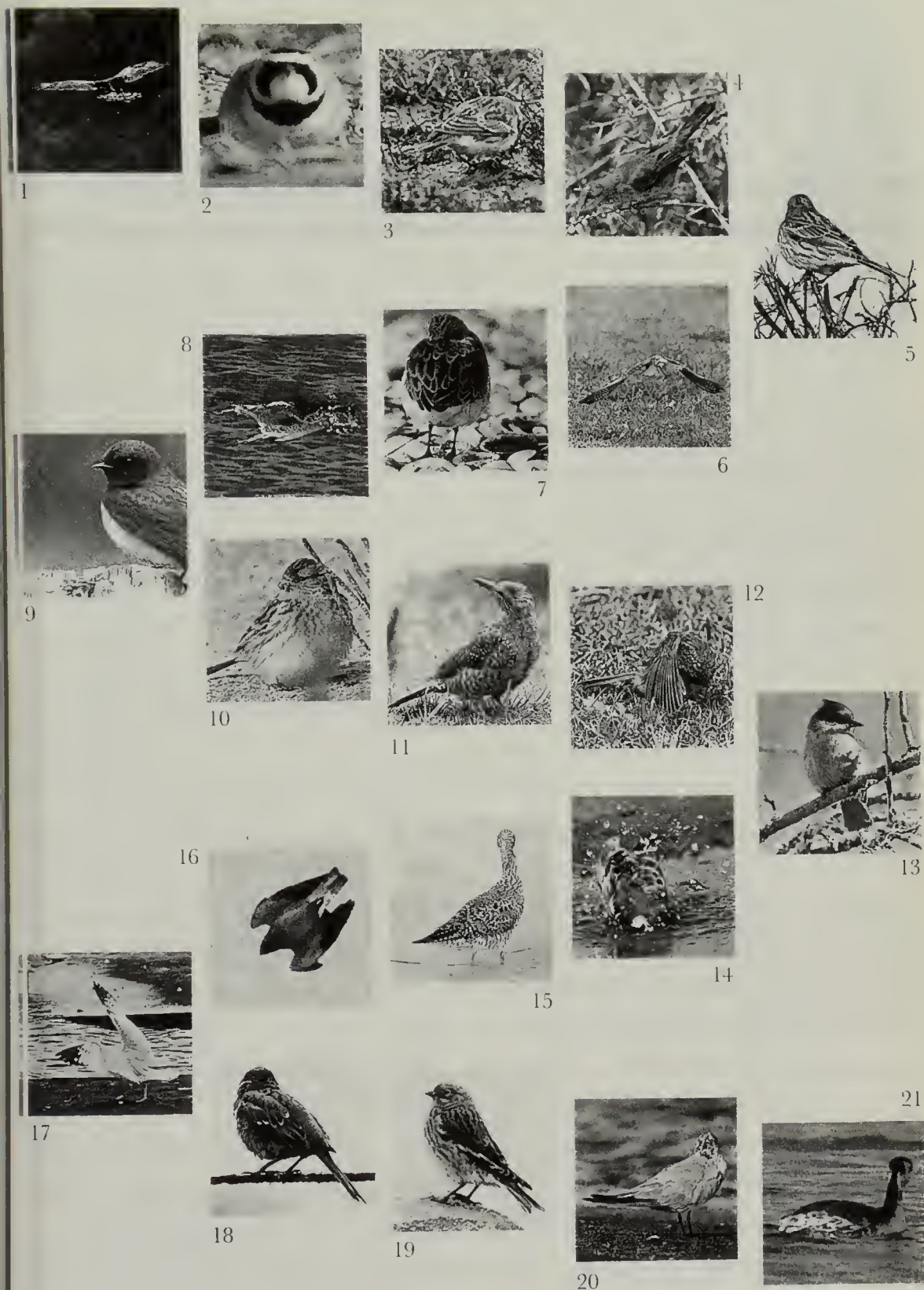
For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DE; or telephone Sandy 0767 682969.

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51. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149), fourth stage: photo no. 83. Identify the species. Send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th June 1993

Hannu Jännes's winning sequence:



(1) Short-toed Eagle 66%, (2) Temminck's Horned Lark 50%, (3) Horned Lark 77%, (4) Cyprus Warbler 25%, (5) Yellowhammer 33%, (6) Red-footed Falcon 84%, (7) Red-necked Stint 22%, (8) Sabine's Gull 88%, (9) Barn Swallow 96%, (10) Twite 86%, (11) Green Woodpecker 92%, (12) Robin 80%, (13) Siberian Jay 59%, (14) Pied Wagtail 63%, (15) Greater Yellowlegs 86%, (16) Booted Eagle 78%, (17) Ring-billed Gull 76%, (18) Tree Sparrow 35%, (19) Snow Bunting 39%, (20) Gull-billed Tern 40%, and (21) Slavonian Grebe 36%.



Heading for extinction?

VISITORS TO ASIA may have been lucky enough to see Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi*. Lucky, yes, because the survival of this species is under great threat.

Its three known breeding grounds and most of its wintering area lie within China. Saunders's Gull is adapted to breeding in a very particular habitat: land which has been naturally reclaimed on the coast from silt which has washed downstream from deep inland. Indeed, the gulls choose areas which are in the transition from damp saltmarsh to dry saltmarsh, where the salinity of the soil has declined, allowing a low cover of vegetation. The colonies are in areas of silt deposit at the mouths of rivers, areas which are being reclaimed by the human population almost as fast as the mud is formed.

The most northerly breeding area at the Shuangtaizi River Nature Reserve, Liaoning Province, produced almost no chicks last year. There, the land is being reclaimed to a depth of around 3 m below high-tide level for reservoirs, shrimp ponds and rice fields, and the saltmarsh destroyed. The newly reclaimed land is left to allow the salt content to decline and so can provide good conditions for the gulls, but, in these unnatural conditions, the mud dries out fast and is quickly invaded by tall, dense vegetation and mammalian predators.

Breeding success at all three colonies has been affected by considerable human disturbance, including egg-collecting. The WWF is attempting to arrange a number of stop-gap measures, but there is no certainty about the long-term future for the species.

The developments at Shuangtaizi Reserve have been authorised at the highest level in government, and will require a major effort to reverse.

You can help by writing to the Nature Reserve Management

Office, Ministry of Forestry, Hepingli, Beijing 100714, China, to express politely your concern and that of the international community. Mention the rarity of Saunders's Gull and request that it be listed as a Category One protected species and ask the Ministry to ensure proper management of the reserves where it breeds. (We should like to thank Geoff Carey of Hong Kong for sending us this information.)

Three new British birds

The eighteenth report of the BOU Records Committee (*Ibis* 135: in press) notes that the following six records (relating to five species) have been accepted by both the British Birds Rarities Committee and the BOURC. Three species have been added to Category A:

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* Lundy, Devon, 24th-25th April 1987.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* First-summer male, Skerryvore Lighthouse, Strathclyde, 4th-7th June 1985, found dead on 8th June; male Moel-y-gest, Gwynedd, 4th June 1987. (Identification of two earlier individuals, on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, from 29th August to 6th September 1966, *Scot. Birds* 1: 451-452, and Rye, East Sussex, on 10th August 1977, was also accepted, but the records were not transferred from Category D to Category A because of the higher risk at that time of the origin being escaped cagebirds.)

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes granuacus* Landguard Point, Suffolk, from 30th June to 8th July 1981, transferred from Category D to Category A.

Two species have been added to Category D (which does not form part of the British List and includes species which might have had a captive origin, but could have been of natural occurrence):

Monk Vulture (Black Vulture; Cinereous Vulture) *Aegypius monachus* Various localities in mid Wales from 29th November 1977 to 20th February 1978 (this record was previously rejected as almost certainly an escape from captivity; it is still considered to be an unlikely vagrant and there is sufficient evidence to suggest that escape from captivity could have been possible, but natural occurrence cannot be excluded, so it is, quite properly, placed in Category D).

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* Probable adult, Noss, Shetland, 25th-26th June 1985.

Records not accepted include **Mottled Swift** *Apus equatorialis* at Spurn, Humberside, 23rd-27th October 1988 (identification not proven) and **White-cheeked Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus*, Flamborough Head, Humberside, 17th-19th May 1990 (identification accepted, but not a long-distance migrant, natural occurrence considered very unlikely, common in captivity, and some feather damage could suggest a possible captive origin).

The BOURC has separated *Butorides virescens* from *B. striatus* and has assigned all British records to the former, recommending the English name **Green Heron**.

The BOURC has accepted the record of **Two-barred Warbler** *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* seen on Gugh, Isles of Scilly, on 22nd-27th October 1987, but treats this form as a race of Greenish Warbler, *P. trochiloides plumbeitarsus*; similarly, the **Green Warbler** *P. nitidus* (on the British List on the strength of the one seen on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, from 26th September to 4th October 1983) is treated as a race of Greenish Warbler, *P. t. nitidus*.

These changes bring the totals for the British and Irish List, as maintained by the BOU, to:

Category A (of natural occurrence since 1.1.58*)	521
Category B (of natural occurrence prior to 1.1.58*)	20
Category C (introduced by man, but now firmly established)	9
TOTAL	550

*The significance of this date is that records have, since then, been assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

ACRE

A new organisation, the Association of County Recorders and Editors (ACRE), has been formed to provide a forum for exchange of ideas and to co-ordinate the work of the county recording system. The ACRE is the brainchild of Michael J. Rogers, currently Hon. Secretary of the British Birds Rarities Committee, and, more relevantly in this context, also former County Bird Recorder for Sussex and for the Isles of Scilly.

The ACRE is totally independent and is self-funding, but will of course be co-operating with other ornithological organisations. It will be producing its own newsletter for internal circulation to ACRE members.

We welcome this initiative, which sensibly will combine the work of the long-defunct Report Editors' Committee (formerly under the aegis of the BTO) and the irregular and too-infrequent County Recorders' Meetings (organised by *British Birds*).

Ballycotton doomed?

Partial drainage was bad enough. Then, a couple of years ago, a breach was made in the shingle-bar which separated this magnificent Co. Cork lake and marsh from the sea. Finally, in autumn 1992, high tides have brought huge amounts of sand onto the marshes, converting the rich muddy habitat into sterile sandy beaches useless for waders.

The Irish Wildbird Conservancy has announced (*IBC News* 74 (Spring 1993): 4) its plans to promote Ballycotton, under the EC's Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) scheme, to encourage the numerous farming interests in the area to co-operate in maintaining and restoring this important wildlife area. (JTRS)

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—Northeast

Dave Holman—East Anglia

Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland

David Tomlinson—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

Keith Vinicombe—Southwest

John Wilson—Northwest

Shetland hails

The horror of the MV *Braer* oil spill may well lead some who were planning a trip to Shetland this summer to think again. Please don't. The islanders' need your support, and, although it has been a disaster for birds, other wildlife and people who live in the immediate area of the spill, the majority of the coastline and sites of bird breeding colonies are unaffected. Only 3 km of the 1,500-km coastline were affected, and about 8 km² of land were seriously affected by air-carried vapour and dispersant (about 3.5% of the total land area). We do not yet know of the full impact of the oil on the marine environment; we may never know.

Ian Newton FRS

We are delighted to report that the ultimate scientific honour has been bestowed upon Dr Ian Newton, who was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on 11th March. Readers will be aware of Ian's popular ornithological contributions (e.g. *Finches*, 1972; *Population Ecology of Raptors*, 1979; *The Sparrowhawk*, 1986, and his membership of our Behaviour Notes Panel. He is currently Head of the Vertebrate Ecology Section in the NERC Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Monks Wood Experimental Station.

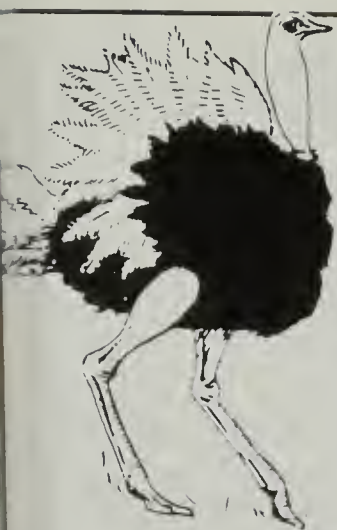
Tina Jolliffe

We were very sad to learn of the death of Tina Jolliffe on 8th December 1992. Her work for Children's Tropical Forests UK (noted in *Brit. Birds* 83: 340) included obtaining money to buy more than 1,100 ha of Costa Rican forest and, more recently, fundraising for the BirdLife International project at Thailand's Khao Nor Chuhi reserve, where Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* was rediscovered. *World Birdwatch* (15: 22) notes that, in Tina's memory, the main trail at Khao Nor Chuhi will be named after her. (JTRS)

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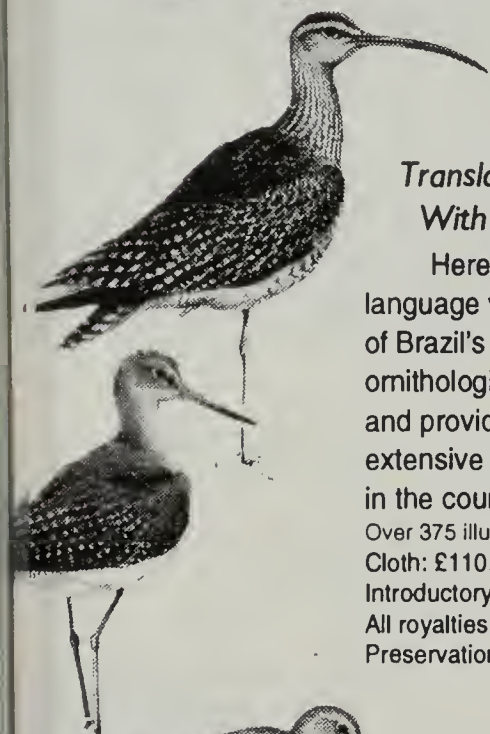


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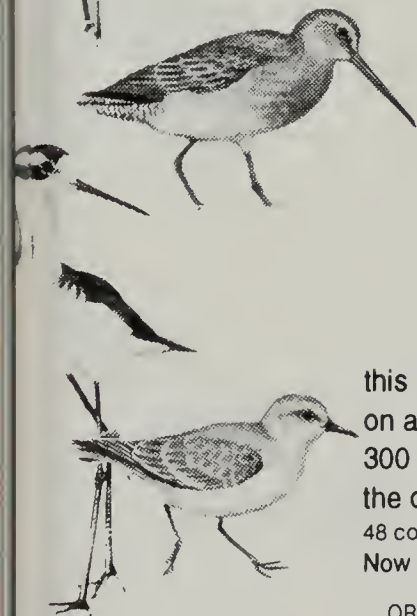
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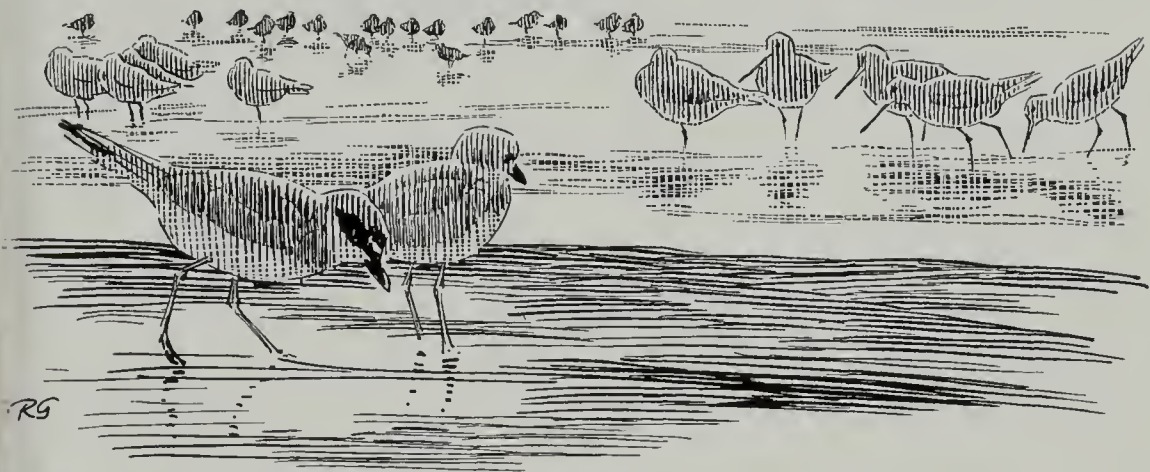
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Waders in Hong Kong

Ray Tipper

Hong Kong lies just within the tropics on the South China coast at longitude 22°20'N and latitude 114°10'E. Its land area is only a little over 11,000 km², yet in Mai Po and Deep Bay, in the northwestern New Territories (plates 58 & 59), it boasts a wetland of truly international importance. Wintering waterbirds include such rarities as Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* and Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi*, but it is the waders that provide the real spectacle, especially during the spring passage when numbers increase dramatically. With each high tide, the waders are forced off the Deep Bay mudflats, and many head for the specially managed pools of the Mai Po Nature Reserve to roost. The excellent facilities at the Reserve, which is managed and partially owned by the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong, have been developed since 1983 and, by providing improved access and key observation points, they have greatly assisted the study of waders in the area.

No fewer than 57 species of wader have been recorded in Hong Kong, but only three have been proved to breed. Habitat destruction has resulted in the loss of the Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chinurgus*, which last bred in 1973. There is just one breeding record of Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula*

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- 52. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, April 1988 (Ray Tipper). Moulting into summer plumage, showing the narrow breast-band that helps separate this species from Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*. This individual appears to have a smaller bill than is usual for Greater Sand Plover
- 53. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, April 1991 (Ray Tipper). Adult in summer plumage; note that breast-band has black upper bands and extends to upper belly at flanks
- 54. Juvenile Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Tsim Bei Tsui, Hong Kong, October 1987 (Ray Tipper). Note neat, small-feathered, extensively spotted plumage of juvenile
- 55. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, April 1991 (Ray Tipper). Moulting into breeding plumage





benghalensis, in 1988, when young were observed. Breeding by Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* was first confirmed in 1981, since when there have been several more records.

The more common wintering species include Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* and Common Greenshank *T. nebularia*, although small numbers of other species are regularly recorded and recent evidence suggests that an expanding list of species is spending at least part of the winter in the Deep Bay area. This trend is also apparent in summer, when non-breeding birds have taken to loafing on the Mai Po Nature Reserve. Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola*, Common Greenshanks, Terek Sandpipers *Actitis cinereus* and Grey-tailed Tattlers *Heteroscelus brevipes* are now regularly recorded in summer, and it has recently been discovered that a number of species use the reserve as a moulting ground (D.S. Melville *in litt.*). Midsummer observations at Mai Po have produced single-day sightings of close to 200 waders of 20 species.

The first waders of the autumn passage usually appear at the end of July, and numbers increase gradually to a peak of about 1,300 by the second half of September. Spring migration, however, is far more dramatic, and is usually well underway by the end of March. Numbers swell rapidly until mid April, when high counts of up to 12,000 are recorded. The passage continues strongly, but in declining numbers, throughout May, although in that month the largest numbers of later migrants (e.g. Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Terek Sandpiper and Grey-tailed Tattler) are witnessed.

It is not just the numbers of birds involved which makes the spring passage so impressive; it is also the breathtaking variety. To see 35 wader species or even more in a day is far from exceptional. Many of the species are familiar in Western Europe, while others, including Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Pacific Golden Plover *P. fukua*, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*, Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*, Little Curlew *N. minutus* and Grey-tailed Tattler, are vagrants to Europe, and yet others have not yet been recorded in Europe, but could be in the future. This last group includes a trio of little-known species: Spoonbill Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*, Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Nordmann's Greenshank *T. guttifer*.

The accompanying selection of photographs depicts some of the essentially Asiatic species. All the photographs were taken in Hong Kong in the Deep Bay area, most at the Mai Po Nature Reserve.

The Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* is one of the commoner spring migrants in Hong Kong and regularly occurs in mixed flocks with the invariably far less numerous Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*. Numbers of Greater Sand Plovers build up to a maximum of about 600 by mid April, although as many as 2,700 have been recorded. By this time, the vast majority have acquired breeding plumage, which transforms them from their reputed ungainly appearance to strikingly attractive waders (plate 52). The nominate race which occurs in Hong Kong (D. S. Melville *in litt.*) breeds in the northern Gobi Desert of Mongolia and northwestern China, but its winter range has

not been fully determined, although it is likely that it extends from southern China through the Philippines, Borneo and New Guinea to northwestern Australia (Lane 1987).

It is the nominate race of Lesser Sand Plover which visits Hong Kong, although there are also several records of *atrifrons* (Chalmers 1986). A feature of *mongolus* (and *stegmanni*, which does not occur in Hong Kong) in breeding plumage is a narrow black border separating the white throat from the russet breast (plate 53). Compared with Greater Sand Plover *C. l. leschenaultii*, Lesser Sand Plover *C. m. mongolus* has darker, less sandy upperparts and displays a much broader breast-band which extends to the flanks. Its legs are shorter and greyer than those of Greater Sand Plover, and it is also shorter-billed. In Hong Kong, where they are seen in summer plumage, there is no real reason for confusion between the two species, as the plates demonstrate. In non-breeding plumage, however, identification relies more on structure and accordingly requires care. The spring passage of the Lesser Sand Plover through Hong Kong begins in late March, peaking in late April, usually with approximately 50, although 500 were recorded in 1991, and continuing until the end of May or early June in diminishing numbers. The race *C. m. mongolus* breeds in eastern Siberia and winters in the Philippines, New Guinea and south to Australia (Lane 1987). Alternative spring migration routes (depending on race) take this species overland or around the western rim of the Pacific (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

Although it may be seen at almost any time of the year, the Pacific Golden Plover is principally a passage migrant in Hong Kong, with somewhat larger numbers in spring, when a maximum of over 580 has been recorded. Plates 54 and 55 show individuals from each passage. The October bird (plate 54) can be aged as a juvenile by the yellow-washed breast, which is mottled brown, and the distinctly barred flanks. In contrast, the April individual (plate 55) is beginning to moult into breeding plumage.

Plate 56 is instructive since the Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* is rarely illustrated, fresh breeding plumage. The blackish feathers of the upperparts have prominent white fringes, which quickly wear off, leaving rufous fringes (Chandler 1989). The fringes on some of the tertials and scapulars of this individual already show the first signs of colour. Those visiting Hong Kong are of the eastern race *sibirica*, which acquires much brighter, more rufous upperparts than the nominate race, and the upper line of the split supercilium is less distinct (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Hayman, Mareham & Prater 1986) although this latter feature is still obvious on the individual illustrated. Broad-billed Sandpipers are passage migrants to Hong Kong, with higher numbers normally occurring in spring. A record 320 were present at Mai Po in mid April 1988, but counts of 50-100 are more usual.

In breeding dress, the Great Knot is very distinctive. Its boldly marked underparts are unique among waders in the genus *Calidris*, although it has

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556. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, April 1988 (Ray Tipper).
Moulting into breeding plumage
557. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, April 1988 (Ray Tipper). Moulting into
breeding plumage, acquiring rufous scapulars and extensively marked underparts





58. Gei Wai and mangroves, Mai Po Nature Reserve, Hong Kong, September 1988 (*Ray Tipper*)

59. Part of 'The Scrape', Mai Po Nature Reserve, Hong Kong, April 1992 (*Ray Tipper*)



striking similarities to the Surfbird *Aphriza virgata* of the Americas. Dense black spotting on the breast and two rows of bright chestnut-spotted scapulars produce a showy combination of features. The bird in plate 57 has not yet acquired full breeding plumage, but already shows extensive breast-spotting and a single line of chestnut-centred scapulars. The Great Knot is one of the 'Asian' waders which are truly long-distance migrants. Breeding in northeastern Siberia, the majority of the population moves to Australia for the northern winter (Lane 1987). Formerly regarded as a scarce passage migrant in Hong Kong, each spring since 1988 has produced counts in excess of 200, with maxima of 300 at Mai Po in mid April 1990 and early April 1991.

The Oriental Pratincole has been recorded in Hong Kong in every month of the year, but is principally a passage migrant, with higher numbers in spring. Although typically occurring in small parties, flocks of over 200 have been recorded in both spring and autumn. Occasionally, migrating flocks are seen spiralling high on the thermals and drifting on the wind. The winter-plumaged bird in plate 60 was one of a small group found resting and feeding in an abandoned paddy, and is rather poorly marked. Others in the party showed red on the sides of the gape and a buffy-cream throat, bordered by a more sharply defined black line.

Recent guides and stint-identification papers (Wallace 1974; Kitson 1978; Jonsson & Grant 1984; Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986) have drawn attention to the Long-toed Stint's habit of assuming a long-necked, erect posture, and plate 61 portrays this attitude well. This species is a passage migrant and winter visitor in relatively small numbers, most often being encountered singly or in groups of up to a dozen. In contrast, the Red-necked Stint (plate 62) is one of the commonest of the spring passage waders, usually reaching a peak of about 1,000, though the maximum count is of 1,500. Ringing recoveries have revealed that at least some of those passing through Hong Kong winter in southeast Australia.

The final two species, Asiatic Dowitcher and Nordmann's Greenshank, have not been recorded in the Western Palearctic. Both are little-known birds which are considered to be globally threatened (Collar & Andrew 1988). Howes & Parish (1989), however, reporting on information gathered by the INTERWADER programme conducted by the Asian Wetland Bureau, indicated that this was an unduly pessimistic view of the status of the Asiatic Dowitcher. They referred to flocks of over 1,000 having been found in recent winters at three locations in Java and Sumatra, with an astonishing 13,000 at one of these sites in November 1988. Parish (1989) estimated the world population to be 15,000-20,000. Other recent sightings listed by Howes & Parish (1989) included migrant flocks of over 500 in spring in Thailand and 470 in autumn in Sarawak. With the northwest coast of Australia providing the only other known sites where Asiatic Dowitchers regularly occur in significant numbers (Lane 1987), Hong Kong is perhaps the most easily accessible place to see them. At Mai Po, they are present from late March until the end of May, with the annual maximum being recorded in the second half of April. Typically, there are 50-100, although 339 were seen in late April 1981 and 304 at the end of April 1990. The return passage produces, by comparison, a trickle in August and September, when juveniles outnumber adults. The

Asiatic Dowitcher is significantly larger than either of the 'American' dowitchers, being closer in size to the Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, with which species it shares similar plumages (plate 63). Its all-black bill, slightly swollen at the tip, and distinctive feeding action, however, readily distinguish it from the godwits.

Nordmann's Greenshank is the most endangered of the waders visiting Hong Kong. The world population has been estimated at fewer than 1,000 (Parish 1985; Howes & Lambert 1987), but Howes & Parish (1989) have suggested that recent sightings may indicate that the true figure is slightly larger. Until the mid 1980s Nordmann's Greenshank was considered a vagrant to Hong Kong, but improved access to favoured sites and increased observer competence have combined to establish it as a scarce but regular spring passage migrant. With such a small population and opportunities for field observation of the species severely limited, it is not surprising that, until recently, the identification features were poorly or even incorrectly described. Its separation from Common Greenshank requires great care and provides a notable example of the need to record a combination of characters rather than rely on just one. The emphasis placed in the past on the supposedly distinctive two-toned bill of Nordmann's Greenshank is confusing given that Common Greenshank regularly displays a bicoloured bill, as is clearly illustrated in the photographs on the jackets of *Shorebirds in Australia* (Lanc 1987) and *North Atlantic Shorebirds* (Chandler 1989). Kennerley & Bakewell (1987, 1991) have discussed in detail the species' field identification. Useful distinguishing features from Common Greenshank include its shorter, yellower legs; heavier, blunter bill; and stockier body. In winter plumage, it is decidedly pale-headed (plate 64), while in breeding plumage the upperparts appear strikingly spangled, an effect created by the dark-centred scapulars and tertials being heavily notched white.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong for all the help and encouragement they gave me to obtain the photographs taken on the Mai Po Nature Reserve. In summarising the status of waders in Hong Kong, extensive use has been made of Chalmers (1986) and the admirable annual bird reports published by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. I should like to record my special thanks to Geoff Carey, Peter R. Kennerley, Paul J. Leader and David S. Melville, whose comments on an early draft of this article were invaluable. Geoff Carey also provided information (some unpublished) on wader numbers which he has painstakingly gathered in recent years.

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60. Oriental Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Ha Tsuen, Hong Kong, November 1987 (Ray Tipper).
Non-breeding adult
61. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Ha Tsuen, Hong Kong, December 1987 (Ray Tipper).
Showing classic, 'head-up' alert pose; note double supercilium so characteristic of this species
62. Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, May 1988 (Ray Tipper). Moulting
into breeding plumage
63. Asiatic Dowitchers *Limnodromus semipalmatus* with Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* (right),
Mai Po, Hong Kong, April 1988 (Ray Tipper). The dowitchers are in various stages of moult to
summer plumage
64. Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, May 1988 (Ray Tipper). The
rather plain plumage, lacking the darker upperparts and spotted underparts, suggests that this
may be a first-summer or non-breeding individual





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Reviews

Putting Biodiversity on the Map: priority areas for global conservation. By C. J. Bibby, N. J. Collar, M. J. Crosby, M. F. Heath, Ch. Imboden, T. H. Johnson, A. J. Long, A. J. Stattersfield & S. J. Thirgood. International Council for Bird Preservation, Cambridge, 1992. 90 pages; 42 colour plates; numerous maps and histograms. Paperback £12.50.

This book represents the results of the ICBP's Biodiversity Project. 'Biodiversity', we are told, 'is the total variety of life on earth.' Birds are good indicators of biodiversity, since important areas for birds are generally also important for plants and other animals. Given this, the book details 221 Endemic Bird Areas, the survival of which is crucial for global biodiversity conservation.

There is a brief chapter explaining the project's methodology, followed by a global overview of results. This contains some remarkable statistics such as the fact that 26% of the world's birds are confined to the 221 EBAs, which occupy just 5% of the land surface. This overview is then broken down into more detailed regional accounts.

This very readable, well-designed document is a credit to the ICBP. Thanks to clear presentation, the wealth of facts and figures is easy to assimilate. It is essential reading for anyone interested in birds and their conservation.

STEVE ROOKE

Les Oiseaux Rares en France. By Philippe J. Dubois & Pierre Yésou. Editions Raymond Chabaud, Bayonne, 1992. 364 pages; 201 line-drawings; numerous maps and histograms. ISBN 2-87749-033-5. FF195

This book is an absolute 'must' for any West European birder interested in the patterns of occurrence of rare birds. Each species is illustrated with a decorative line-drawing, making the book attractive, but the essence of it is the lists of records, histograms or maps showing the distribution of rare birds in France. Not only are all the records included of the species considered to have occurred naturally, but also over 30 with a more dubious origin. The text is, of course, entirely in French, but that should not discourage any potential purchaser. (This is essentially an updated, hardback version of *Inventaire des Espèces d'Oiseaux Occasionelles en France* by the same authors, published in 1986; reviewed: *Brit. Birds* 79: 409.)

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills of the World. By James A. Hancock, James A. Kushlan & M. Philip Kahl. Illustrated by Alan Harris & David Quinn. Academic Press, London, 1992. 385 pages; 89: colour plates; 49 distribution maps. ISBN 012-322730-5. £65.00.

This sumptuously produced book, a rare combination of ornithological merit and coffee-table elegance, adopts a similar format to *The Herons of the World*. It combines a literary review with the results of the authors' collective field experience of 41 of the 49 species treated. Some will feel that the Olive Ibis on São Tomé, *Bostrychia (olivacea) bocagei*, and the White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis (pappilosa) davisoni* should have been treated separately, as additional species.

The introductory chapters deal with taxonomy, feeding, breeding behaviour and conservation. All species accounts are complemented by an immaculate painting (including appropriate habitat backgrounds) by Alan Harris or David Quinn. Very useful distribution maps are included, but, at

times, they seem unnecessarily expansive. Biometric data are presented in some detail in an appendix, and the bibliography is enormous. This book will become an essential reference source for birders and ornithologists interested in any of the species treated.

The authors sought to pay 'particular attention to documenting the status of threatened and rare species and evaluating their conservation needs.' To a large extent this aim seems to have been ably fulfilled. There are, however, a few cases where it appears that insufficient use has been made of the available material, most strikingly the comprehensive review of the ever-weakening status of Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* in *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands* (Collar & Stuart 1985). This species might have merited more detailed discussion as a classic illustration of the insidious decline common to many ibis species.

Such minor niggles hardly diminish the fact that this is a simply superb publication. It is an exceptionally good modern example of that ibis of ornithological publications, the lavish monograph, which has been driven close to extinction by market forces. It is a rare treat, an unavoidable reference, and, by the standards of today, extremely good value for money. This is in part a reflection of the financial support provided by the Brehm Foundation.

ROD MARTINS



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th March to 18th April 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Filey Bay (North Yorkshire), 21st-26th March; North Mainland Shetland, 17th-18th April.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* White Sands Bay, St David's Dyfed, 11th April.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Rutland Water Leicestershire area, 3rd to at least 13th April.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* The Fleet Dorset, 17th to at least 18th April.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Stodmarsh Kent, 4th April.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford), 10th April; three at Cemlyn Bay (Anglesey), 10th to at least 18th April.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* Individual at Loch of Hillwell, South Mainland (Shetland), moved to Quendale (Shetland), 17th-20th March.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* Musselburgh Lagoons (Lothian), 27th March.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Denaby Lings (South

Yorkshire) and Ditchford (Northamptonshire), 21st March; near Wadebridge (Cornwall), 26th March; Durlston Country Park (Dorset), 1st April; Slapton Ley (Devon), 8th April; near Aberystwyth (Dyfed), 9th April.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* Trapped, Copeland Bird Observatory (Co. Down), 16th to at least 18th April.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* Portland (Dorset), 9th-11th April; Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 10th-13th April; Rattray Head (Grampian), 17th April.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* Males on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 10th-11th April, and at Knockadoon Head (Co. Cork), from 15th to at least 18th April (first and second records for Ireland).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* Near Maidstone (Kent), 19th-28th March; Stanpit Marsh (Dorset), 20th March; Filey Dam Nature Reserve (North Yorkshire), 11th-12th April.

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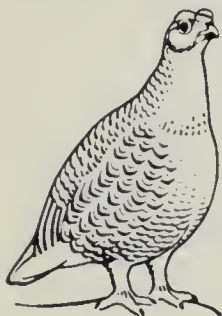
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Rarity descriptions **M. J. Rogers**, Bag End, Churchtown, Towednack, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

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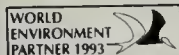
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Sun 13th June

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STAFFORDSHIRE
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GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Sat 12th & Sun 13th June

FILEY DAMS
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Sat 5th & Sun 6th June

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RESERVE
Sun 27th June

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KENT
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WWT MARTIN MERE,
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Sun 6th June

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20-22 AUG '93

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Participants include: 8TO — RSPB — British Ornithological Union — Bucks Bird Club — Hawk & Owl Trust — Bird Photography — Wildlife Computing — Tring Museum — 88ONT — conservation & wildlife groups — etc etc

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every effort is made to take
range of equipment and
t can be made in all the
ays. Repairs can also be
in
am to 4.00 pm*

**HAM HARBOUR LOCAL
FIRE RESERVE**
32145 into Selsey, West
on Sunday 30th May and
one.

**ENOAKS WILDFOWL
ERVE**
A25 between Riverhead and
aks Bat and Ball station on
6th June and 4th July.

**GGH BEECH NATURE
ERVE/RESERVOIR**
1 miles south of the A25/A21
1 (with access from the B2042
7, the information centre is
orth of the reservoir) on
ss 13th June and 11th July.

LL WATER
A21, just south of
hurst in the Education
on Sunday 23rd May.

**COLLEGE LAKE WILDLIFE
TYRE**
Tring, Herts, on the B488 (off
close to Bulbourne
6th June (Birdwatcher's Fair
above) and Saturday 26th

EBRIDGE, GLOS
Village Hall (on the left,
along village road into the
Saturday 5th June and 31st

**CON PASTURES
COUNTRY PARK**
Reading (M4, A329(M)
way turnoff) and then A329 to
ish and Winnersh Station
() on Sunday 23rd May and
ly in the Loddon Room

SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST
ds Mill, Henfield, W Sussex
() on Sunday 20th June. A
FACILITY has also been
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oculars
(0273 492630)

LLSTON COUNTRY PARK off
51 near Swanage, Dorset. In
tor centre on Sunday 11th

**KENT TRUST FOR NATURE
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near Sandling, Maidstone (off
Bluebell Hill, going south), on
27th June, 10.30 am to 4.00 pm.

WICKEN FEN off the A1123
east of Cambridge. In the
centre on Sunday 25th July.

DMARSH NNR (TR 220610)
ation hut in car park. Take
road to Grove and Stodmarsh
A28 Canterbury/Margate
Saturday 20th June.

WINNINGFIELD RESERVOIR
A130 north of Basildon.
on Sunday 22nd August
ishing lodge)

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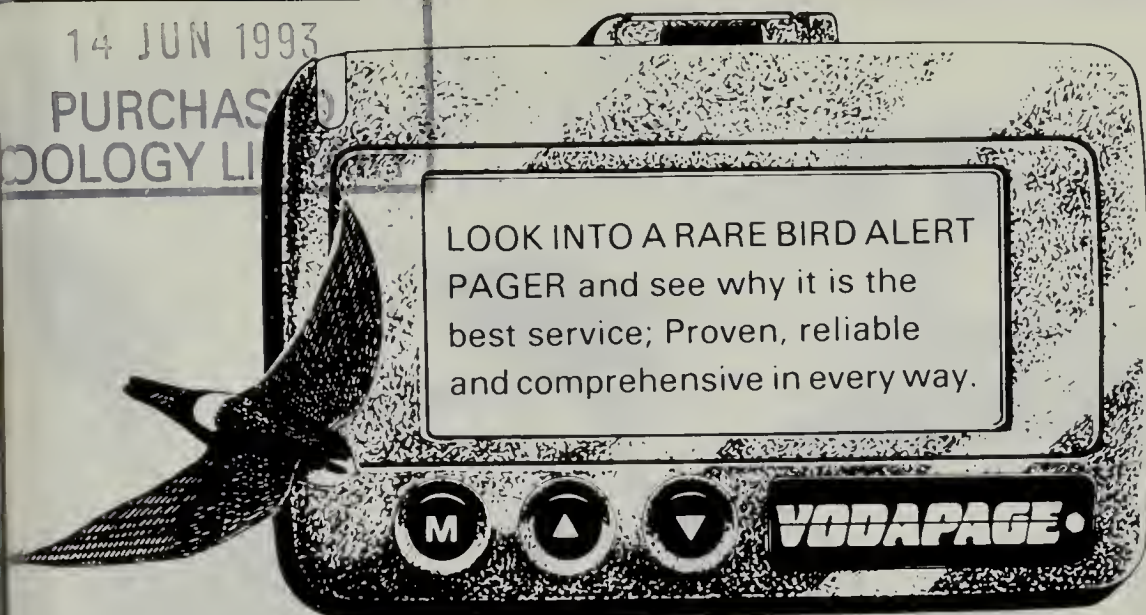
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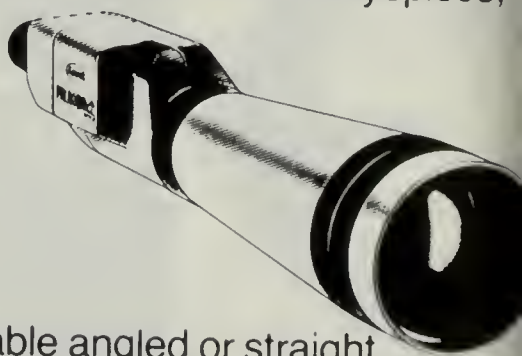
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British Birds

VOLUME 86 NUMBER 6 JUNE 1993



Bird Photograph of the Year

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On 3rd February, the four judges faced a total of 120 colour transparencies submitted by 44 top bird-photographers, knowing that by the end of the day there had to be one winner. A daunting task, but, after six enthralling hours of study, discussion and comparison, the following placings were agreed:

1st BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR

HOOPOE *Upupa epops* (plate 65) **ALAN WILLIAMS, Essex**

- 2nd Blue-checked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* (plate 66) Jens Eriksen, Sultanate of Oman
- 3rd Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* (plate 67) Chris Knights, Norfolk
- 4th= Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* (plate 68) W. Richardson, Cleveland
- 4th= Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* (plate 69) Hans Schouten, Netherlands
- 6th= Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* (plate 70) Tony Bond, Lancashire
- 6th= Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (plate 71) Terry Button, Kent
- 8th Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Bob Glover, Essex
- 9th Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* Gordon Langsbury, Berkshire
- 10th Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* R. J. C. Blewitt, West Midlands
- 11th= Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* Tony Hamblin, Warwickshire
- 11th= House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* E. A. Janes, Hertfordshire
- 13th Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* Dr Mark Hamblin, Sheffield
- 14th Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* Dr E. C. Fellowes, Dumfriesshire
- 15th Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Mike Weston, Netherlands
- 16th Blackstart *Cercomela melanura* Axel Halley, Germany
- 17th Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* Dr Mark Hamblin
- 18th Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* R. J. C. Blewitt

Most entrants had submitted the maximum allowed number of three transparencies. The distinction of having all their three transparencies selected in the first short list was achieved by three photographers: Dr E. C. Fellowes, Gordon Langsbury and Hans Schouten; 12 others had two of their three selected.

The judges' first short list of 42 was difficult enough to obtain, but this was then weeded down to 28. At this stage, Gordon Langsbury and Hans Schouten still had all three transparencies included, and seven other photographers still had two. Before the final vote, however, the judges had, with great reluctance, to eliminate another ten. The final short list of 18 transparencies, on which the judges then voted, still included two by R. J. C. Blewitt and two by Dr Mark Hamblin: with such consistency, they, Gordon Langsbury and Hans Schouten must be future winners of this competition. The character of this competition, however, is determined by the award for the single photograph considered by the judges to be the best and most interesting of the year.

Alan Williams's winning photograph (plate 65) came as the result of a chance encounter, when a local gamekeeper at Abberton Reservoir, Essex, told him about a Hoopoe feeding on a roadside verge in a nearby village. The Hoopoe was so engrossed with feeding that it allowed Alan Williams to back his car slowly towards it until he was only about 6 m away. The bird was feeding on insect larvae, which it picked up and flicked in the air before swallowing. Of five shots, this one brilliantly captured the larva in mid-flick, just about to be swallowed.

Jens Eriksen's three entries all featured colourful species photographed in Oman. His Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (plate 66) not only provides a marvellous portrait of this very beautiful bird, but also has the added interest of showing well the insect prey—a dragonfly—and is aesthetically very pleasing, with the muted greenish background, against which the back-lit bird nevertheless stands out well, and the cobwebs attached to the perch adding to both the picture's interest and its beauty.

The Stone-curlew attempting to drive a lamb away from its nest (plate 67) was described by Chris Knights as follows: "The Stone-curlew is saying "STOP! This is as far as you go!" A pair of Stone-curlews nested in a field with a flock of sheep, most of which took no notice of them except one or two ewes and lambs which obviously liked to disturb them each time they walked past. As the sheep came close to the nest, both birds stood their ground, and displayed in this manner with wings fanned. As the lambs approached nearer, the bird would peck their noses, but this particular lamb always held his head

65. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1993. Hoopoe *Upupa epops* feeding, Essex, April 1992 (Nikon F4; f.5.6 600 mm Nikon; 1/250th, f.8; Kodachrome 64) (Alan Williams)
66. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* with dragonfly, Oman, June 1992 (Nikon F4s; 560 mm Leica Telyt; 1/60th, f.6.8; Fujichrome 50 Velvia) (Jens Eriksen)
67. Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus* displaying at lamb, Norfolk, May 1992 (EOS 100; Canon 300 mm; 1/180th, f.8; Kodachrome 64) (Chris Knights)
68. Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, Co. Durham, May 1992 (Nikon F801; f.5.6 400 Sigma (APO) lens; 1/250th, f.11; Kodachrome 200) (W. Richardson)
69. Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* about to copulate, Texel, Netherlands, May 1992 (Nikon 801; f.6.8 560 mm Leitz; 1/500th, f.8; Kodachrome 200) (Hans Schouten)









high to escape the attack. The Stone-curlews were very successful at driving the lambs off. We then decided to erect an electric fence around the area to give the Stone-curlews protection.'

The pair of Oystercatchers, the male just about to mate (plate 68), was photographed by Hans Schouten on the Dutch island of Texel.

W. Richardson was driving through an upland wooded area in Upper Teesdale, Co. Durham, when he noticed the Woodcock sitting on a stone wall (plate 69). After carefully positioning his car, he was able to spend nearly 30 minutes taking a variety of photographs at different apertures/speeds and lens combinations. The bird was within a very small patch of sunlight on the mostly shady wall (the photographic judges commented that, in their experience, the reverse of this happy situation was more normal whenever *they* tried to take a bird photograph). The tail-up posture is, perhaps, a means of anti-predator protection, the tail-end being more likely to be attacked than the head; or perhaps this is a mild threat display; or it may merely be that this posture increased the incidence of warm May sunshine on the bird.

Tony Bond's family of Great Crested Grebes (plate 70), photographed from the causeway of a reservoir complex near Wigan, Greater Manchester, is not only aesthetically pleasing, but is also full of action, one young grebe climbing onto the back of the adult on the nest, while another is being fed by the swimming parent, the incubating adult looking with parental concern towards its swimming mate and young. The nest, the vegetation and the birds' positioning within the picture make this at-the-nest photograph difficult to fault.

Terry Button obtained the photograph of the male Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima* wing-stretching (plate 71) from a hide beside a dyke on Ham Marsh, Kent.

As in the past, the judges greatly enjoyed their task of spending a whole day looking at such a wide range of stunning photographs, most of them far more than mere portraits, showing fascinating aspects of bird behaviour. The continuation of this annual competition is ensured by its sponsorship by the natural history publishers Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd and HarperCollins Ltd.

The prize-winning photographers and runners-up will all be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception in London this month.

J. T. R. SHARROCK, R. J. CHANDLER, DON SMITH and
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A selection of some of the short-listed photographs will be published in the summer 1993 issue of the magazine *Birds Illustrated*. We, and the two sponsors of Bird Photograph of the Year, HarperCollins and Christopher Helm Publishers, are delighted to be able to announce this co-operation between *British Birds* and *Birds Illustrated*. EDS

70. Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* family, Greater Manchester, June 1992 (Canon F1; f.4.5L 500 mm Canon; 1/250th, f.6.3; Kodachrome 64) (*Tony Bond*)

71. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima* wing-stretching, Kent, May 1992 (Nikon F801; Nikon 600 mm f.4 + 1.4 converter; 1/60th, f.5.6; Kodachrome 25) (*Terry Button*)



Monthly marathon

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With the new rules (see March issue, page 149), a flood of entries has been received for the first three stages in the sixth 'Monthly marathon':

STAGE 1 (plate 18): Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (71%), Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* (10%), Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca* (4%) and Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* (3%), with 2% or less each for 12 other species.

STAGE 2 (plate 32): Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (46%), European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* (6%), Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (6%) and House Martin *Delichon urbica* (6%), with 3% or less each for 31 other species.

STAGE 3 (plate 38): White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* (60%), Blackstart *Cercomela melanura* (16%), Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (7%), Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (5%) and Blue Rock Thrush *M. solitarius* (4%), with 3% or less for eight other species.

The correct identifications were Wood Sandpiper (SCORE 29; photographed by Ren Hathway in Cornwall in April 1990), Leach's Storm-petrel (SCORE 54; photographed by G. Carr in West Yorkshire in September 1990) and White-throated Robin (SCORE 40; photographed by Volker Konrad in Turkey in June 1989).

The new rules do not require that the winner identifies every photograph correctly, so the current leaders do not necessarily include the eventual winner of the SUNBIRD holiday to Africa, Asia or North America. There are, however, 45 contestants who have named all three birds correctly, so their scores are $29 + 54 + 40 = 123$. (The more difficult the ID, the higher the score. Each score represents the % of contestants who got the answer wrong.)

The fourth stage was plate 51 last month (closing date 15th June), and the fifth stage is featured below (plate 72, closing date 15th July).



72. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149; fifth stage: photo no. 81). Identify the species. Send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1993



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Migrant Ring Ouzels at a stopover site on the South Downs

Roy Leverton

Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* from both the British and the Scandinavian populations regularly occur on passage in lowland England, where the species does not breed. Although Durman (1976) analysed the timing of this passage through Britain using bird-observatory records, little has been written on the behaviour and habitat choice of birds pausing or stopping over: Cramp (1988) could refer only to Witherby *et al.* (1938) and to Gilbert White (1789), who was the first to record Ring Ouzels on the sheep downs of Hampshire and Sussex. Nowadays, more are recorded in Sussex than in any other southern English county, most being found on the chalk of the eastern South Downs, where they regularly stop over for several days (Leverton 1989).

Stopover sites such as wetlands and estuaries are well recognised for wild-fowl (Anatidae) and waders (Charadrii)—relatively long-lived species which migrate either as family parties or in big flocks containing old and experienced as well as young birds, and where ringing has shown that the same individuals return year after year. Stopover sites are often claimed for passerine migrants too (Ellegren 1990; Karlsson *et al.* 1988; Safriel & Lavee 1991), usually without defining the term. Indeed, it was omitted by Campbell & Lack (1985) from their comprehensive ornithological dictionary: although ‘refuelling sites’ are mentioned under their entry on migration, these are not necessarily identical. For example, Bairlein (1987) showed that passerines carrying an ample supply of fat may stop over in the Sahara simply to rest in the shade throughout the day, without feeding at all.

But how valid is the concept of a ‘traditional’ stopover site for short-lived passerines which migrate singly or in small groups which may be made up entirely of young birds making their first journey? Can they purposely navigate towards a staging area they have never seen, or do they merely stop over if the place where they happen to land is fortuitously suitable, and move on as

soon as they can if it is not? Does any site regularly receiving falls of migrants qualify as a stopover site (to take an extreme example, a North Sea oil rig in fog), or should the term be reserved for areas deliberately selected by migrants because of habitat as well as geographical location? The distinction between a voluntary and an involuntary stopover site may be hard to make and often blurred, yet the type of site must influence the physiological condition, perhaps the age and sex ratios, and the subsequent behaviour of the individuals which stop there.

Between 1976 and 1989, having access to downland near Lewes in East Sussex especially favoured by passage Ring Ouzels, I was able to make the following behavioural study, and to evaluate the arguments for this part of the South Downs being a stopover area, in the stricter sense, for passage Ring Ouzels, as opposed to a chance-found refuge.

Site and methods

The site covered about 8 km² (800 ha) of chalk downland ranging in altitude from 30-200 m and lying between 5 km and 10 km from the coast. More casual observations were made over a wider surrounding area. Most of the site was open farmland, either arable (chiefly barley and wheat) or improved pasture, in large fields often of 25 ha or more and of limited interest to birds. Some of the steeper slopes, however, remained as unimproved chalk grassland, mostly of SSSI status, often with belts of gorse *Ulex europaeus* and being invaded by pioneer scrub such as hawthorn *Crataegus*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and raspberry *Rubus idaeus*. This was tall and very dense on some hillsides, but far more open and scattered on those regularly grazed by cattle and sheep and with a high population of rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*.

Observation and ringing took place on many parts of the site throughout the year, with visits increasing from once or twice weekly in winter to almost daily at the height of the passage seasons (especially in later years), when the areas holding most migrants received the best coverage. Attempts were made to mist-net any Ring Ouzels found. Their behaviour was observed, originally as an aid to catching them, but in later years for its own sake. All birds caught were aged and sexed, then weighed and measured, using the techniques given in Svensson (1984), before being released with the minimum of delay. No attempts were made to retrap birds thought to have been caught once already. Netting operations, whether or not successful, had no apparent effect on how long individual Ring Ouzels stayed, but they did become more wary.

Because of the plumage differences between the sexes, and to a lesser extent between first-year and older birds, coupled with considerable individual variation in the size and clarity of the breast crescent and the amount of yellow on the bill, it was generally possible to differentiate in the field single birds or small parties stopping over for several days from new arrivals, even if the presence or absence of a ring could not be seen. Such assumptions were occasionally confirmed by accidental retrapping.

Numbers and timing

In the 14-year period, an estimated 49 individual Ring Ouzels were seen in

spring and 234 in autumn. Because their nearest breeding area, in south Wales (Sharrock 1976), is over 200 km from the Lewes site, and summering or wintering are unknown in Sussex (Shrubbs 1979), there was never any doubt that all those seen were on passage. Fig. 1 shows the finding dates, though doubtless some had arrived a day or two earlier. Unsurprisingly, the pattern is very similar to that at Dungeness, Kent, and Portland, Dorset (Riddiford & Findley 1981).

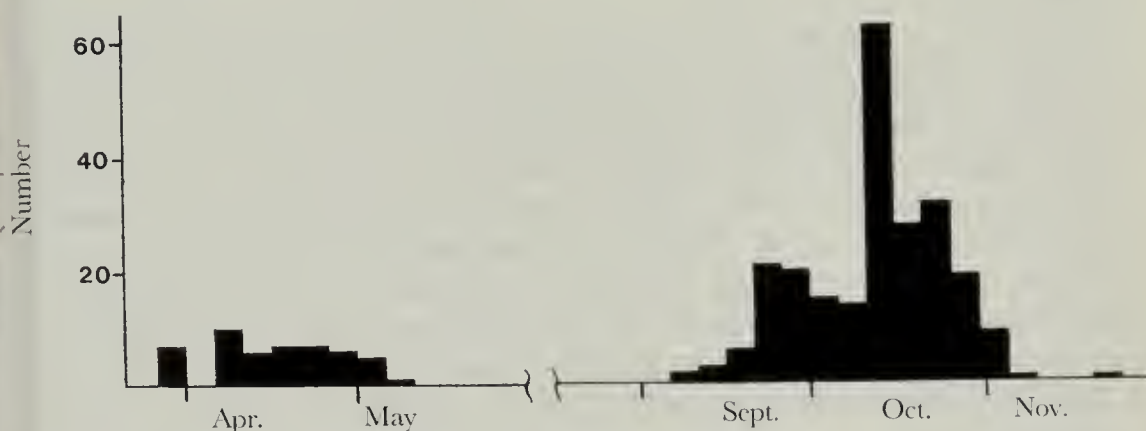


Fig. 1. Finding dates by five-day periods of Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* at a stopover site near Lewes, East Sussex, 1976-89

In autumn, 69% were found after 8th October, so, according to Durman (1976), these can safely be considered Scandinavian in origin, the British population having left the breeding grounds by the end of September. Those seen before 8th October could belong to either population, but the clear sub-peak in the last ten days of September probably reflects the main passage of British birds. Ringing evidence supports these views: a nestling ringed in Gwent in 1980 was controlled at the site on 19th September 1980, while one of a flock of ten ringed on 23rd October 1987 was found in Norway the following July—the first such confirmation that Scandinavian Ring Ouzels pass through Britain in autumn (Mead & Clark 1989). No separation of origins was possible in spring.

Although Ring Ouzels might arrive in almost any wind and weather, larger numbers in spring and autumn were usually associated with anticyclones giving light easterly winds and haze or coastal fog: classic conditions for falls of Scandinavian drift migrants. This probably explains why numbers varied greatly from year to year. In spring they ranged from no sightings at all in several years to an exceptional 30 in 1989, and in autumn from a single individual in 1978 to 80 in 1988.

A basic premise of this study is that parts of the South Downs are important specifically for passage Ring Ouzels, not just for passerine migrants in general. Thus it needs to be shown that Ring Ouzels are more numerous there than at other major passage sites, and that they are disproportionately numerous compared with other species of migrants. Table 1 compares the Lewes site with three coastal observatories and Beachy Head. To lessen the problems of different coverage and methods of counting (bird-days or numbers of individuals) ringing totals are used, comparing Ring Ouzels with two other species of passerine chosen because they are purely migrant at all

Table 1. Ringing totals of Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus*, **Common Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* **and Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca* **at Lewes and Beachy Head, East Sussex, compared with those at three major coastal observatories, 1976-89**

Site	Ring Ouzel	Redstart	Pied Flycatcher
Lewes	133	126	3
Beachy Head	92	270	73
Spurn, Humberside	64	560	527
Dungeness, Kent	54	867	816
Portland, Dorset	14	727	443

the sites, are readily caught in nets or traps, occur at similar seasons and originate both from Britain and from Scandinavia.

More Ring Ouzels were caught at Lewes than at the three observatories combined, but less than 6% of their total of Common Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and under 0.2% of their Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*. Even allowing for some bias through targeting of Ring Ouzels at Lewes, the figures suggest that they are disproportionately numerous there (and Pied Flycatchers oddly scarce). Secondly, the totals for Beachy Head, where no special attempts to catch Ring Ouzels are made, confirm their relative frequency on the eastern South Downs.

General behaviour

Normally it was obvious when Ring Ouzels were present. In open habitats, they could sometimes be seen at a distance of 200-300 m. More usually, they saw the observer first, and gave the 'tuc . . . tuc' contact call grading into more urgent 'tak-tak-tak' alarm calls. They often perched prominently on top of a bush, like a Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* or Common Stonechat *S. torquata*, or less conspicuously on a bare side branch, where they had a clear view of the approaching danger. Having assessed this, they might either fly low, with further contact calls, to take cover in gorse or hawthorn, or to give the flight call while perched: 'tsierk', sometimes double: 'tsierk-sierk' or even treble; sometimes there was an almost bugling quality: 'tsuurk'. These are the calls listed as 2b and 2c by Cramp (1988); all seem to be variants of the same call. They signal the intention to make a longer, higher flight, but this may not be put into effect if the danger subsides or if other individuals in the party are unwilling. Otherwise, they take off, with further flight calls, not simultaneously as would a flock of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, but in ones and twos, domino-fashion, so that the airborne flock is strung out, often with 10 or 20 m separating individual birds. They gain height rapidly, often to 100 m or more, and leave at least the immediate area. The general direction taken by autumn migrants was westerly, but this may have been due to local topography. It seemed that they were visually searching for alternative suitable habitat, veering frequently first one way and then another. About 30% of newly found Ring Ouzels left the site in this way, never to be seen again, either to continue their migration or to find a new stopover site locally. More often, having reached an altitude of over 200 m and flown almost out of binocular range (>500 m), individuals or flocks would surprisingly turn back and descend to the same or an adjacent coombe, presumably because no other habitat in view equalled that which they had left. Those that did not leave when found

typically stayed for three days, even if the weather seemed perfect for migration and their weights were high with pre-migratory fat. If bad weather intervened, Ring Ouzels might stay a week or more, before leaving on the first suitable night.

Habitat chosen

During the 14 years of the study, Ring Ouzels were never found close to farmsteads or other habitation, near roads or the railway, or in deciduous woodland or shelterbelt. They were rarely seen on arable fields or improved pasture, on hillsides covered with dense scrub, or in small relict areas of natural grassland and scrub surrounded by farmland; those that were, never stayed for long, often moving on within a few minutes. In both spring and autumn, by far the most favoured habitat was extensive, steep slopes and coombes of grazed chalk grassland with only patchy, scattered gorse and scrub (plate 73).

The angle of these chosen slopes varied from 10-25°, with an average of about 20°. They began around the 90-m contour, below which was flatter arable land or improved pasture, and rose steeply before rounding into an undulating plateau of slightly improved grassland just reaching an altitude of 200 m. On the steepest parts of the slopes, sheep and cattle paths formed narrow terraces of bare soil an average of 1.5 m apart. Especially in the more sheltered coombes, elders and hawthorns of varying ages and sizes (some of the latter very old) covered not more than 10% of the hillside, but gorse, bramble and raspberry often clothed a further 10-25%. Other plants present included white bryony *Bryonia dioica*, black bryony *Tamus communis*, and bitter-sweet *Solanum dulcamara*. The turf of the hillsides was totally unimproved and very herb-rich, and, except where patches of tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*

73. View of habitat most preferred by passage Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* in the study area on the South Downs near Lewes, East Sussex (John Holloway)



were established, was kept short by cattle and sheep grazing and by rabbits, so that in spring and autumn it was mostly 2-5 cm in height. Anthills were numerous.

Feeding behaviour in spring

In spring, Ring Ouzels fed exclusively on the shortest turf, with a sward height of 0.5-2.5 cm and up to 30% bare ground exposed by erosion, scarring and grazing pressure. Feeding methods were typically thrush-like: several springy hops, or a short run, followed by a peck. They were obviously taking surface items which could not be identified at long range, but checks of the feeding areas always revealed many spiders, and Diptera. They were never seen to take earthworms.

Although some regularly fed 50 m or more from the nearest cover, they were usually within 5-10 m of the edge of gorse or other low scrub, which perhaps acted as a windbreak as well as a refuge in case of danger. Roughly half the day was spent feeding in sessions of up to one hour, between which they rested in the scrub (hawthorn bushes by preference). Occasionally, low-intensity sunning was seen on the open turf close to cover.

Because of the brownish cast to the downland turf in early spring produced by the persistence of old dead stems from the previous year, Ring Ouzels (females especially) were quite well camouflaged when feeding out in the open. The line formed by the pale edges of the greater coverts and carried on by the distinct pale fringes of the secondaries effectively split the birds lengthways and disguised their shape. Even the white breast-crescent of the males, startlingly obvious in a frontal view of the alert posture (and perhaps a danger signal to other flock members, like the white neck patches of the Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*), could at other times act as disruptive camouflage, breaking up the shape of the bird, for example when perched amongst straggly gorse. In all circumstances, Ring Ouzels were less conspicuous than the Blackbirds *Turdus merula* and Common Starlings which sometimes fed near them.

Feeding behaviour in autumn

In autumn, Ring Ouzels occupied exactly the same hillsides as in spring, but fed almost entirely on berries; this was confirmed by examination of faecal remains. They were very seldom seen feeding on the ground, and even then it was suspected on most occasions that they were taking fallen berries, not invertebrates. Elderberries were preferred for as long as they were available (usually until mid October), then haws. White-bryony berries and blackberries were sometimes eaten, but black-bryony berries, though locally abundant, never seemed to be touched.

When feeding on elderberries, Ring Ouzels normally selected a tree which had grown up in the protection of a dense hawthorn, as frequently occurred; often the branches of the two were intertwined. If danger threatened, the Ring Ouzels could slip swiftly into the shelter provided by the hawthorn, its spiky twigs being an effective defence against attacking Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* whereas those of elder are not (pers. obs.). Certain mixed pairs of trees were favoured year after year. Especially on the morning of arrival, Ring Ouzels spent periods of an hour or more sleeping in these

hawthorns after feeding in the elder, though they were never used for roosting at night.

Late in some Octobers, if the haws in the downland coombes were badly depleted (as in 1988), Ring Ouzels ventured out along a tall hawthorn hedge between two of the highest arable fields; otherwise they avoided such areas.

Flocking

Some species of birds are gregarious on passage, others solitary. The Ring Ouzels in this study showed surprising variation. When more than one were present in the same part of the site, there was always some liaison between them. Sometimes all formed an inseparable tightly knit group. In other instances, they associated much more loosely, in extreme cases acting quite independently apart from occasionally exchanging contact calls. Not infrequently, there would be a discrete flock, plus a singleton only loosely associated with it. On 3rd October 1987, a single male exchanged calls with a flock of four in the same coombe, but never joined them. By 6th October, the flock had left, but the single bird stayed until at least 17th October, by which time it was associating with four new Ring Ouzels which had recently arrived.

On the few occasions when larger numbers were present, they sometimes initially formed one big flock, which later broke down into smaller units, each in its own coombe. This happened in the major fall of mid October 1988, when a flock of at least 30 on the morning of 12th soon broke up into smaller groups (including later arrivals) of ten to 12 individuals. This may have represented the optimum flock size (Caraco 1979) for the habitat and time of year; if so, there were rarely enough Ring Ouzels present on the site to achieve it, and most parties consisted of two to five individuals.

In spring, the situation seemed more complicated. By 23rd April 1988, a flock of eight had built up from Ring Ouzels arriving in ones and twos over the previous ten days; they fed together on short open turf. A ninth individual, a first-summer female, atypically fed on very small patches of turf between regenerating gorse, and associated with the flock only when it briefly visited her area. Towards the end of the month, the flock broke down as three individuals left and the remainder split into two groups which fed separately, 150 m apart, on the same hillside: two males in one and a male and two females in the other.

During the study period, no obvious signs of sexual activity, such as display, courtship, aggression or territorial behaviour, were ever seen in spring, nor did males appear to associate more closely with females than with other males when both were present. Song was heard on only one possible occasion, on 13th April 1989 – a few brief notes presumed to be from one of a flock of four males (out of sight in dense cover) during the evening chorus of resident Blackbirds and Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*. A tape of Ring Ouzel song never elicited a response in spring or autumn.

Ring Ouzels which had associated during the day also roosted together. The favoured site was a low dense hawthorn bush or thick clump of gorse near to the edge of a larger area of scrub but separate from it, perhaps to give all-round visibility. Normally it was well away (up to 1 km) from the feeding and resting areas where the Ring Ouzels had spent the day. They would dis-

appear almost surreptitiously, so that roosts were hard to find, well before dusk and up to 45 minutes before the resident Blackbirds went more noisily to roost.

Learning

The study provided a rare opportunity to observe birds learning about their environment in the field rather than in the laboratory. Newly arrived Ring Ouzels were visibly unsure and naïve – as remarked by Gilbert White (1789). If disturbed, their flight was aimless and erratic as they sought new habitat. By the end of the third day, however, those that stayed had learnt the geography of the immediate area up to a radius of 1 km. Besides their preferred feeding ground, they usually had an alternative, up to 700 m away, to serve as a refuge if disturbed. Even when this was completely out of sight owing to the convex downland curves, they were able to slip away, often low and silently, on the correct heading, and return when the danger was past. They also had a regular roost site, and resting areas during the day. Once, on their third day, the leader of a party of three took them unerringly to drink and bathe at a small concealed dewpond on the flat plateau 98 m higher and 0.5 km distant from the hawthorns where they had been feeding, and then returned. All Ring Ouzels apparently soon learnt the position of mist-nets, and those not caught early on were increasingly difficult to trap.

Interaction with other species

The only positive association seen was between Ring Ouzels and Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*. Both contact and flight calls of the two species are not dissimilar, and Ring Ouzels, especially singles, sometimes joined and fed with Fieldfare flocks, or took off with them when they left. When this happened, the attraction was always short-lived, and the Ring Ouzels broke away as if realising their mistake. Occasionally, Redwings *Turdus iliacus* joined up with Ring Ouzels, as they often do with Fieldfares.

Surprisingly, no interaction of any kind was observed between Ring Ouzels and Blackbirds, either in spring or in autumn. Even when male Blackbirds were chasing rivals from their territories in early April 1989, they completely ignored the flock of five male Ring Ouzels which was conspicuously present. A breeding pair of Mistle Thrushes *Turdus viscivorus* flew over to investigate this flock, but did not attempt to drive them away. Both these species are cited as possible competitors with Ring Ouzels for breeding territories (Durman 1978; Williamson 1975). The Ring Ouzels themselves showed no aggression and did not sing; had they done so, the response may have been different.

On several occasions in autumn, Ring Ouzels making short low flights through scrub were closely followed and harried by Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella*, and once by Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis*, perhaps in the same way as small passerines often chase Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* (Marchant 1982). Once, a solitary male Ring Ouzel taking off in a coombe where crows *Corvus* were soaring was pursued at high speed for over 200 m by a Carrion Crow *C. corone corone*, apparently with serious intent, until it gained the refuge of a hedge. A first-year male Ring Ouzel killed by a female Eurasian Sparrowhawk in October 1988 was the only known fatality during the study period.

Departure

Departure, when there was no doubt that the Ring Ouzels were leaving the site naturally to continue their migration, was witnessed only a handful of times, always at dusk. In each instance, there seemed to be a 'departure ceremony'. The most extreme involved an adult female and a first-year female which had arrived on different days but formed a close alliance. On the evening of 12th October 1985, both went to roost in gorse towards sunset. After about an hour's silence, when the light was almost gone, one began to give contact calls and was answered by the other. The duet progressed into an excited medley which included variations on the flight call and other sounds not heard before and not easy to describe – perhaps the 'chuckling note' of departing migrants mentioned by Baxter & Rintoul (1953). Both birds ascended to the tops of bushes, then left together. On two other occasions, solitary Ring Ouzels leaving at dusk gave a shorter series of less-intense calls.

Once, the presumed 'invitation to migrate' was declined. On 18th April 1989, two Ring Ouzels, the remnants of a flock of seven first seen on 7th April, rose into the air at dusk giving urgent flight and chuckling calls, and climbing steeply. Two others which had arrived that day answered them from the gorse where they were roosting with 'tuc tuc' contact calls only. Although the two departing birds continued to call as they climbed higher, and circled as if waiting for those on the ground to join them, they eventually left northwards unaccompanied. The newcomers stayed a further seven days.

Birds in the hand

Of 49 Ring Ouzels seen in spring, 19 (39%) were caught, as were 115 (49%) of the 234 autumn birds. As about 30% at either season left the site almost immediately they were found, the proportion caught of those known to have stopped over rises to 55% in spring and 70% in autumn.

All Ring Ouzels belonged to the nominate race, though the pale feather edgings of the body plumage, wing-coverts and secondaries varied greatly. They were all but absent on one autumn adult male, while at the other extreme one first-year male and one adult female closely resembled Svensson's (1984) illustration of the subspecies *alpestris* in the pattern of their undertail-coverts, but less so in that of their belly feathers.

In autumn, 25.2% of those caught were adults. This is probably less than their status in the population as a whole, allowing an average of four young per pair with the help of replacement clutches and partial double-broodedness (Flegg & Glue 1975), but still high for a passerine trapped at a migration site. The excess of males was not significant, even when both age groups were combined ($\chi^2 = 2.81$, n.s.). Mean dates of trapping for males and females, and for first-years and adults, were very similar (table 2).

In spring, the excess of males was significant ($\chi^2 = 5.26$, $P < 0.05$) among those trapped, suggesting that the similar imbalance of sight records at this season (Sussex Ornithological Society, unpublished files) is not due to observers overlooking the duller females. Males also passed through earlier (table 2), as noted by Durman (1976).

Wing-lengths (table 3) exclude those from a few spring individuals with obviously abraded primaries. Being taken from live birds, they average slightly

Table 2. Age and sex of Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* caught at a stopover site near Lewes, East Sussex, 1976-89, with mean trapping dates in autumn and spring

	1st-y ♂	adult ♂	1st-y ♀	adult ♀
Number in autumn	48	19	38	10
Mean catching date	11th Oct.	9th Oct.	13th Oct.	11th Oct.
Number in spring	7	8	1	
Mean catching date	17th Apr.	4th Apr.	20th Apr.	

Table 3. Wing-length (flattened and straightened wing, in mm), and weight (in g) at first capture, of Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* at a stopover site near Lewes, East Sussex, 1976-89

	1st-y ♂	adult ♂	1st-y ♀	adult ♀
Wing-length	114.7 ±2.6	147.1 ±2.2	141.1 ±2.4	114.0 ±1.9
Range (no.)	136-150 (52)	142-151 (27)	136-146 (10)	141-147 (10)
Weight in autumn	113.0 ±8.6	114.1 ±7.5	108.9 ±8.6	105.8 ±7.0
Range (no.)	89-128 (48)	103-130 (19)	92-125 (38)	92-118 (10)
Weight in spring	114.9 ±6.2	107.9 ±7.0	119.0 ±9.6	
Range (no.)	106-123 (7)	98-120 (8)	109-131 (1)	

greater than published ones based on skins (Svensson 1984; Cramp 1988). There are insufficient published weights of passage Ring Ouzels to enable any detailed comparison to be made, but the average at Lewes in autumn and spring would seem to be high for a bird of this size (table 3), and most of those examined carried a good store of pre-migratory fat. Only the lightest individual, a first-year male weighing 89 g, appeared in any way to be weak, and even this was well above the 51.5 g of an exhausted male in the Netherlands (Cramp 1988). There were few retraps (because of trap-shyness plus a policy of minimising disturbance), but table 4 shows instances of weight gain averaging 1.66 g per day.

Table 4. Weight gains (in g) by passage Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* at a stopover site near Lewes, East Sussex

Age & sex	Ringling date	Weight	Retrap date	Weight	Gain	g/day
1st-y ♀	25.10.76	117	29.10.76	126	9	2.25
1st-y ♀	25.10.76	120	29.10.76	126	6	1.50
1st-y ♀	18.10.80	112	24.10.80	125	13	2.17
1st-y ♀	19.09.87	96	24.09.87	101	5	1.00
1st-y ♂	03.10.87	102	17.10.87	123	21	1.50
1st-y ♀	30.10.87	96	01.11.87	100	4	2.00

Size is fundamental to any bird's biology and its ecological opportunities and requirements (Calder 1984). Gilbert White (1789) correctly stated that 'the Ouzel is larger than the Blackbird.' Inexplicably, later authors, including Witherby *et al.* (1938), Simms (1978) and Cramp (1988), together with all the modern field guides (Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow 1979; Ferguson-Les, Willis & Sharrock 1983; Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom 1984) mistakenly imply the opposite. There is some overlap, but the Ring Ouzel averages larger than the Blackbird in all dimensions, including total length (table 5), and is heavier. As

Table 5. Comparison of total lengths (in mm) of Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* and Blackbirds *T. merula* trapped near Lewes, East Sussex

	1st-y ♂	adult ♂	1st-y ♀	adult ♀
RING OUZEL				
Total length	256.4 ±4.2	259.8 ±5.5	249.5 ±4.5	252.2 ±5.8
Range (no.)	250-267 (41)	250-269 (24)	240-259 (27)	244-259 (10)
BLACKBIRD				
Total length	243.3 ±4.8	252.2 ±5.2	239.9 ±4.4	244.5 ±4.6
Range (no.)	231-251 (50)	240-266 (50)	230-249 (50)	233-254 (50)

a more northern and a more upland species than its congener, this would be expected (James 1970). The size difference also suggests that Ring Ouzels may have an advantage over Blackbirds, but not over Mistle Thrushes, in any direct competition for territory.

Discussion

The Ring Ouzels' preference in spring for steep, open, well-grazed downland slopes is easily explained: these were the only parts of the site where large areas of short natural grassland with a high invertebrate population still survived, the lower and gentler slopes long having been converted to arable farmland and improved pasture. It is less obvious, however, why they chose those same hillsides in autumn, when they fed almost entirely on berries. The elders and hawthorns they prefer were widely scattered there, and the berry crop often reduced by summer drought on the thin chalky soil and by wind damage. The lower, more sheltered, heavily scrubbed slopes elsewhere on the site carried a far more abundant and luscious berry crop, which was much exploited by migrant warblers, and by all other migrant and wintering thrushes, yet any Ring Ouzels which did land there soon moved on.

To suggest that Ring Ouzels choose bare upland habitats on autumn passage because these approximate most closely to their breeding habitat would be simplistic. Most species are far more catholic in their choice on passage than on their breeding grounds: Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* on East Anglian plough instead of mountain tops, Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* on stubble fields instead of rocky hillsides, Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* in low scrub instead of canopy woodland, and Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* from coniferous forests using gorse are just a few examples. As food supply alone cannot be the reason for the Ring Ouzels' selectiveness, they must gain other important advantages.

I believe that reduced predation is the main factor. At a season when food is abundant, and there are no extremes of heat or cold, predation would seem to be almost the sole threat to Ring Ouzels at a stopover site, with female Eurasian Sparrowhawks the most dangerous predator. In their detailed study of the relationship between birds and berries, Snow & Snow (1988) recorded 33 instances of raptors attacking or disturbing birds feeding on fruits in 113 hours of observation, and found that the threat of predation strongly influenced the way the food source was exploited. On the steep Lewes downland, raptors (especially Eurasian Sparrowhawks) normally hunt along the contours rather than up and down the slope (pers. obs.), and this seems to be the case elsewhere (M. Shrubb *in litt.*). Choosing steep hillsides might, therefore, enable

Ring Ouzels to predict, even on a site unfamiliar to them, the likely direction of a predator's approach. They could then concentrate their vigilance on an arc to either side rather than need to scan the full 360°. The sparseness of cover would also enable them to see a predator at long range: certainly they usually spotted me at a distance of 200 m or more when I, too, approached along the contours. This factor might be especially important if flock sizes are well below the optimum, as the study suggests is normally the case.

A further possibility is that Ring Ouzels choose very specific habitat for stopovers to increase their chances of meeting up with others, and so gaining the benefits of flocking. At least in Britain, Ring Ouzels are sparsely distributed even on their breeding grounds (Sharrock 1976), and the likelihood of migrants meeting up after flights of several hundred kilometres would be small unless there was some mechanism for concentrating them. Whether or not their choosiness about where to stop has evolved to fulfil this purpose, it certainly has that effect in practice. An analogy would be the habit of 'hill-topping', well recognised among many species of butterflies (*Rhopalocera*), which enables those distributed at a very low density over a wide area to meet up for mating at some salient feature of the landscape (Shields 1967).

While it would obviously be advantageous for a newly arrived and tired Ring Ouzel to be able to join up at a stopover site with others which had arrived earlier and knew the best and safest feeding areas, it might be disastrous if its flocking instincts were so strong that it was forced to accompany them if they left before it had time to replenish its own resources. Likewise, breeding birds in spring bound for northern Britain and Scandinavia, or autumn birds bound for different wintering areas of the Mediterranean or Morocco, might only be confused by attempting to travel together. It is tempting to speculate that the more tightly knit flocks seen at Lewes comprised Ring Ouzels which had arrived together or would leave together bound for the same general area, whereas the looser groupings were formed of those with diverse origins and destinations, coming together only to enjoy the mutual benefits of flocking while at the stopover site. For this to work, some form of communication would be essential. Subtle variations or dialects in the flight and contact calls might serve this purpose, while the more striking 'departure ceremonies' might convey information about physiological readiness to migrate and even the length and direction of the intended journey.

The South Downs contain suitable habitat, are conveniently located next to a sea crossing, and are almost certainly reachable in a single flight by most British Ring Ouzels and those leaving southwestern Scandinavia in autumn. The great fluctuation in numbers from year to year, however, suggests that weather conditions, rather than any ingrained distance-and-directional instincts of migrants or knowledge gained from previous migrations, govern the numbers that arrive. This need not mean that the birds find the area purely by chance. Any species which has strict habitat requirements on passage must have evolved effective ways of locating that habitat, otherwise selection would favour greater flexibility. If some species can navigate by the infrasound waves caused by wind passing over mountain ranges, the Ring Ouzel which uses uplands for breeding, passage and wintering would be an obvious candidate to do so. Although the South Downs reach an altitude of

only 248 m, along their northern edge they rise abruptly from the Weald in a steep scarp slope, while to the south they end in sea cliffs up to 150 m high. This could create an infrasound signature audible to a bird for 'many tens of kilometres' (Dr D. Harper *in litt.*). Once over the general area, Ring Ouzels locate suitable habitat by sight, and at night perhaps even by audible clues such as the bleating of sheep, signifying the presence of short-grazed turf. No doubt every migratory species has its own ways of minimising the risk that it will land in unsuitable habitat, and maximising its chances of finding a satisfactory haven; as yet one can only speculate how they might do it.

Conclusions

A combination of habitat, topography and geographical location enabled the study area to function as a true stopover site, especially in autumn, for passage Ring Ouzels. Evidence for this was as follows:

1. Being at least 5 km from the coast, the site was not the first nor the last practical landfall for migrants approaching from any direction.
2. The arrival of birds was not entirely dependent on particular weather conditions.
3. Ring Ouzels were disproportionately numerous at the site compared with other migrants, and with other sites.
4. Arrival weights were generally high (the birds could have continued).
5. Birds generally stayed for several days, even in ideal weather conditions.
6. Birds which stayed gained weight.
7. There was a reasonable proportion of adults to first-years.

For many individuals, refuelling may not have been the only, or even the main, function of stopping over: birds with perfectly adequate fat resources seemed to do so simply to rest, to await better weather, to join up with others of their species, or even to mark time because their migration was ahead of schedule.

Acknowledgments

This paper is dedicated to the memory of the late T. G. Rea of Ashcombe Farm, on whose land most of the study took place. I am grateful to the wardens of Spurn, Dungeness and Portland Bird Observatories for supplying ringing totals; and to Ms S. Hitchings for those of Beachy Head Ringing Station; to all who made helpful comments and suggestions; and to John Holloway for the use of his photograph.

Summary

Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* on passage were studied at a site on the South Downs in East Sussex during 1976-89. They were very specific in their choice of habitat. In spring, they frequented steep chalk hillsides with short natural turf. They used the same hillsides in autumn, even though the berries they fed on were far more abundant elsewhere. Feeding, flocking and roosting behaviour are described; as with habitat selection, these seem designed to minimise the risk of predation. Biometrics of the 134 birds caught are given, including total length: contrary to all the modern literature, the Ring Ouzel averages slightly larger than the Blackbird *Turdus merula*. Evidence is given that the study area was a 'voluntarily chosen' stopover site rather than a chance refuge, and speculation is made as to how passage Ring Ouzels might locate suitable habitat.

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Twenty-five years ago...

On 13th June 1968, 'The first recorded British nest of the Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* was found in the Moray Basin faunal area of Scotland' by Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, now Director of the BTO. *Brit. Birds* 61: 524.

Earlier, three Lesser Grey Shrikes *Lanius minor* had been found in one six-day period, during 4th-9th June 1968, at Radcliffe, Lancashire, and at Sheringham and Winterton Dunes, Norfolk. How many others remained undiscovered?



Sponsored by



From the Rarities Committee's files

A report of a Black Stork On previous occasions, this series has featured high-quality rare-bird-record submissions. The reader ought not to form the impression that all of the records received by the BBRC are up to that standard. The description that follows, though fictional, is similar to more than one record considered by the Committee in recent years.



Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*



Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Drawn by R. A. Hume

BLACK STORK *Ciconia nigra*

I watched it through 10 × 40 binoculars as it flew high overhead up the river valley. It was a large bird with a long, thick, red bill and pinky-red legs and feet. The head and neck were black and the rest of the underparts were white.

The first thought that would enter the head of a BBRC member upon reading this, even before the realisation that it is a single-observer record of a bird seen once only at long range, is that the notes are very brief. It would then be natural to consider what has not been covered in the description: structure, including neck length, wing shape and leg/foot projection beyond the tail, colour of underwings and undertail, colour of upperparts (understandably absent) and flight, including wing-beats and gliding. The notes undeniably eliminate White Stork *C. ciconia*, Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Common Crane *Grus grus* and suchlike, yet doubt remains. Sooner or later, too, a Committee member would mention the possibility of Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, which is not satisfactorily ruled out by the description. The record would not be accepted.

Brief views, poor light, bad weather, long viewing distance, a bird's skulking nature or unapproachability, or any combination of these, can detract from a complete description. Nevertheless, it is sensible for an observer to cover in his or her report every visible aspect of a bird's appearance, and it is reasonable for the Rarities Committee to assume that all available details have been included and that nothing further is to be gained from referring back to the observer.

PETER LANSDOWN

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Michael J. Rogers (Honorary Secretary, British Birds Rarities Committee) has commented as follows: "This example, of what would generally be regarded as a perfectly obvious and easy-to-identify species, is deliberately chosen to demonstrate not only the intrinsic weaknesses in the description but also how easily an over-liberal approach by the Rarities Committee could lead to an unsound decision." EDS



Mystery photographs

189 No prizes for identifying last month's photograph (plate 15, repeated here) as an immature gull. With no other species for comparison, its size is difficult to judge, so we must use plumage and structural characters to



narrow the field. The combination of a two-tone bill, lack of a hood or dark ear-spot, and dark primaries immediately rules out all ages and corresponding plumages of all except seven species of gull that occur in the West Palearctic. The head shape is not particularly angular, the bill is not especially long or deep, and there is an obvious tonal contrast between the mantle and the wings, these features further reducing the possibilities to just three: Common *Larus canus*, Ring-billed *L. delawarensis* and the 'Herring Gull complex' (Herring *L. argentatus*, Yellow-legged *L. cachinnans* and Armenian Gulls *L. armenicus*). Ageing of the first two very similar species is relatively straightforward. Both normally reach adult plumage in their third winter, so the combination of blackish outer primaries, dark-centred tertials, contrasting carpal bar, well-defined dark tail-band, and two-tone bill, all of which are shown by the mystery bird, readily identifies first-winter individuals, although, judging by the amount of wear and abrasion visible on the remiges, it seems likely that the photograph was taken well into the bird's second calendar-year; it is in this plumage that separation of these two species is most problematical.

But what about second-winter Herring Gull (and its close congeners), which superficially resembles first-winter Ring-billed? Herring, however, is a large, heavy, angular-headed gull with a fairly heavy bill, and with a much shorter primary projection than Ring-billed (the latter's is about twice the length of the longest tertial). In addition, second-winter Herring has brown barring on the tertials and greater coverts and some individuals at this age have a pale iris, whereas neither feature is ever shown by first-winter Ring-billed. If the gull were to fly, Ring-billed would show dark tips to its inner primaries, where Herring would have a pale 'window'.

Our bird has a fairly heavy bill, parallel in shape but tapering sharply to a point (this exaggerated by the solid black tip), whereas Common Gull's bill is slender and pointed but more evenly tapering. The head is fairly rounded, with a dark brow over the eye, generating perhaps a less confiding expression than that associated with the even rounder-headed Common Gull. The head is also well spotted, the spots extending over the entire neck, including lower hindneck, and onto the breast, compared with the more mottled appearance exhibited by Common, which rarely shows the breast so well marked. The mantle and scapulars appear to be fairly pale grey, contrasting strongly with the dark-centred tertials: but the pale tertial fringes are prominent and produce a pattern very like that on an abraded first-winter Common Gull—though Common would surely appear darker grey above? The tail-band looks wide and solidly dark, again suggesting Common Gull, but the outermost tail feather, just visible, is mottled/barred, a feature lacking on the vast majority of Commons. Compared with Common Gull, Ring-billed on the water looks characteristically flat-backed, just like the mystery bird, which is, indeed, a first-winter Ring-billed Gull, photographed by A. R. Hamblin at Chew Valley Reservoir, Avon, in March 1987. Many readers will be aware of the difference in median-covert and lesser-covert pattern between Common and Ring-billed Gulls: Common shows neat, rounded spade-shaped dark centres, while on the latter the centres are arrow-shaped. This feature, however, is valid only in fresh plumage, as a quick glance at our fairly abraded bird confirms.

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75. Mystery photograph 190. Identify the species. Answer next month





Notes

Turnstones feeding at Kittiwake nests On 27th April 1991, while photographing a colony of Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* on two adjacent cliffs at Newquay, Cornwall, I was surprised to see two Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* flitting from ledge to ledge on the vertical cliff some 35 m above sea level and shouldering their way among the Kittiwakes. The Turnstones were feeding on insects? right in among the nest material of the Kittiwake colony.

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Herring Gull with black bill and legs On 6th May 1991, at Padstow, Cornwall, we watched a group of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* feeding on scraps. All were in transition from first winter to first-summer plumage, apart from one second-summer individual. The latter was noticeably different also in that it had an all-black bill and, more interestingly, all-black legs. We discounted the possibility of its legs being soiled by mud or oil, as the plumage of the entire underparts was clean. Neither Grant (1986, *Gulls: a guide to identification*) nor BWP (vol. 3) mentions immature Herring Gulls having black legs.

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Feeding technique of Common Guillemot On 23rd August 1990, a bright, sunny day, I watched a Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* feeding on sandeels (Ammodytidae) around Bournemouth pier, Dorset. Large shoals of sandeels were swimming back and forth in the clear water, and the guillemot drifted closer to them, peering underwater. When it saw the fish, it immediately dived and swam very fast into the shoal, separating a part of it into a close-knit sphere of 500 or so fish; these it circled like a sheep dog, steering them away from the piling of the pier. It made regular attacks through the tight ball, generally from below, breaking the surface with one or two fish in its bill. Immediately it would round up the remaining fish. It maintained and fed from this personal 'larder' for approximately a quarter of an hour, when it stopped and preened, the fish dispersing back to the main shoal. This technique showed a marked sophistication compared with that of feeding mackerel *Scouber scoubrus*, also present, which merely dashed through the shoal at high speed, panicking the sandeels in all directions.

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Separation of Striated Scops Owl from Eurasian Scops Owl See pages 286-287 and plates 77-80.

Call patterns of Eurasian Scops Owl The clockwork regularity of calling by Eurasian Scops Owls *Otus scops* could possibly be used to identify different pairs. In February 1991, at Episcopi, Cyprus, observations were made on three pairs of Eurasian Scops Owls (of the race *cyprinus*). Pair A called at an interval between sets that averaged 4.12 seconds (ten samples varying between 4.0 and 4.2 seconds); pair B had an interval of 3.23 seconds (six samples, range 3.2-3.3 seconds); and pair C an interval of 3.8 seconds (two samples only). As the calls were always a double note, it was assumed that they involved pairs of owls 'duetting'. Both owls of pair A were observed entering a possible nest hole under the eaves of a building. On two occasions, calls were heard in the middle of the day. *BIVP* (vol. 4) quotes recorded intervals between calls (presumably of the nominate race *scops*) of 1.8 to 2.3 seconds and of 2.5 seconds or more.

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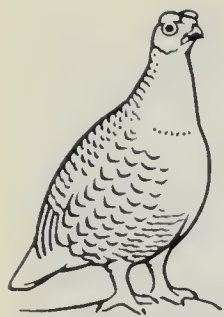
Mistle Thrush placing faecal pellets of rabbit on body and also eating them At about 15.00 GMT on 26th August 1991, in hot and sunny conditions, in a pasture field near West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw four Mistle Thrushes *Turdus viscivorus* feeding near a hedge. Three flew off as I approached, but I watched the remaining one through binoculars at a distance of about 30 m. It squatted and spread its wings and, partly, its tail; after about 30 seconds, it picked up an object in its bill and placed it on the scapular region of one side, so that I had the impression that it was anting. It then seized a faecal pellet of a rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, applied this to the scapular region and allowed it to roll to the ground, when the procedure was repeated. The Mistle Thrush then stood and selected another pellet, which it promptly swallowed. After alternate wing-raising, and ingesting a further pellet, the thrush flew away. Rabbits are numerous in the field concerned and the grass is close-cropped. Rabbit pellets are common locally; those which I subsequently inspected at the site where the thrushes had been feeding were stale and dry, and no associated invertebrates were seen.

The application of faecal pellets to the body could perhaps be interpreted as substitute anting behaviour, but it is more difficult to account for the Mistle Thrush swallowing two pellets: possibly, there were associated invertebrates which I had failed to detect (though none was found on remaining pellets at the site). The pellets concerned would have consisted of undigested cellulose and would have passed twice through the rabbit's intestinal tract, so there could have been little of food value to the bird.

A. P. RADFORD

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented: 'It is difficult to understand just what the bird was doing. Initially, it may have been sunning rather than anting, for the posture adopted by the Mistle Thrush when anting "passively" (i.e. exposing itself to ants) is superficially similar to "spread-eagle" sunning - see my two notes on this species in *Bristol Ornithology* 15: 166-168 - but what it was doing with the rabbit dung is far from clear. It may have been half-heartedly "anting" with a pungent item, but the actions described by Dr Radford do not fit the known "active" anting behaviour of this species at all closely.' EDS



New protection areas for birds

IN MARCH, the Government announced the designation of Great Yarmouth North Denes (Norfolk), the Nene Washes (Cambridgeshire), the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire and Norfolk), Hornsea Mere (Humberside), Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs (both Humberside) as Special Protection Areas under the EC Birds Directive.

The Nene Washes and Gibraltar Point have also been listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, as has Roydon Common (Norfolk). The existing Ouse Washes Ramsar site has been extended.

Readers will be familiar with most of these sites, even if only by reputation; Roydon Common at first seems the odd man out (being known to most birdwatchers for its roosting Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*), but its designation recognises its importance for many rare and locally uncommon plants and invertebrates and the fact that it is the most extensive example of valley mire heathland in East Anglia. We have been critical in the past of the slow progress in designations, but at last some of the lost ground is being made up. There are now 69 SPAs (covering 194,000 ha) and 62 Ramsar sites (274,000 ha) in the UK; those awaiting designation number around 165 and 95 respectively.

OSME in Yemen

Eighteen ornithologists and ecologists left the UK in March on the Ornithological Society of the Middle East's bird-survey expedition to the southern part of the newly united country of Yemen—the part that used to be Aden—and to the island of Socotra. The venture runs into May and we hope to be able to report on it further in due course.

Meanwhile, we were pleased to hear of the publication of *The Birds of Yemen*, a book for

children written by OSME and translated into Arabic and published jointly with the Yemeni Environmental Protection Council, and with financing from Shell. The British Council is helping with distribution, the aim being to get a copy into every school in Yemen. The book covers the country's 96 commonest birds and the 12 which are endemic to southwest Arabia. This is an imaginative step forward; OSME is to be congratulated.

Welsh reedbed survey

An all-Wales reedbed survey by the RSPB has shown how vulnerable they are to development of various kinds and to degradation through a lack of management.

Wales has about 200 reedbeds, but 50% of them are under 0.5 ha and only 15 are larger than 1 ha. They are nevertheless of considerable importance for birds, not only as western outposts for Reed *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and Sedge Warblers *A. schoenobaenus*, but also for their Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* (up to 50 pairs), as staging posts for migrant hirundines, wagtails and warblers and for the mild winter conditions they provide for vulnerable species such as Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* and Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus*.

One of the RSPB's priorities in Wales is to work towards the better management of existing reedbeds and the creation of completely new ones. In this latter respect, it is a pity that the designation of Anglesey as an Environmentally Sensitive Area does not include the provision of money for farmers who are willing to create new reedbeds. Anglesey has almost a quarter of the reedbeds in Wales and, like most of the wetlands on the island, they are deteriorating in quality.

Welsh Bird Report

More than just a systematic list for 1991, the fifth report of the Welsh Ornithological Society includes papers on ringing in Wales, on the latest survey of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in the Principality (280 territories – an increase of 159% since 1981), on migration of Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus*, on the status of breeding waders (most of which are in decline), and several interesting notes. Copies are available (price £4 incl. p&p) from Mike Shrubbs, Hillcrest, Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys LD5 4FL.

Hunting ban

Italy's Minister of the Environment has signed a decree banning the hunting of small birds throughout Italy for a period of six months during 1993. Will it work, we wonder? Forgive us if we appear sceptical . . .

'North West Birder'

Launched with the slogan 'The north-westerly that always brings the birds', the *North West Birder* is a quarterly magazine 'for all bird-watchers in the North-West', edited by John Gregory, Julian Hough, Chris Kehoe and Steve Riley. The 32-page first issue, costing £2.50, was published in January. It contains articles on Iceland *Larus glaucoideus* and Glaucous Gulls *L. hyperboreus* in the Northwest, on little-known birdwatching sites on the South Solway, and on the status of Greylag Geese *Anser anser* in the Northwest, as well as notes, news, recent reports (in September-November), some little-known facts about Ted Abraham, an agony column (with advice from Dr Phil Oscopus LBJ UTV), horoscopes for birders, a 'Page Three Bird' and some investigative reporting by freelance journalist Prunella Schrenk (nicknamed 'the Dunnock' because of her sexual habits) concerning night watching at Sellafield. All very readable. We wish *NWB* well!

The address to write to is NW Birder, 11 Baslow Drive, Heald Green, Stockport, Cheshire SK8 3HW.

Serengeti bird records

The Birds of the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania (BOU Checklist no. 5) by Dieter Schmidl will soon be out of print and the author will be revising the data for a new edition. Relevant records will be gratefully received and acknowledged, and should be sent to Dieter Schmidl, Max-Planck-Institut, D-82319 Seewiesen, Post Starnberg, Germany.

Jersey Report

The first-ever *Jersey Bird Report* was published in December 1992. It includes records of all species seen on the island in 1991, and also gives details of rarity records accepted or rejected by the British Birds Rarities Committee during 1984-91 (by invitation, the BBRC has assessed the island's records since January 1981).

The first issue, with an Alan Harris Dartford Warbler featured on its appropriate cream-coloured cover, has now sold out, but the second will be published in June, price £3.50, and will be available from I. J. Buxton, Le Petit Huquet, La Rue du Huquet, St Martin, Jersey.

IWC birthday



The Irish Wildbird Conservancy was founded in 1968, so this year sees its 25th anniversary. We are delighted to send the IWC our congratulations, not only on its birthday, but also on all its achievements over the past quarter of a century. The change in the Irish public's reactions to bird-

watchers, naturalists and conservationists is very striking to those who have been able to compare the almost complete lack of understanding of the early 1960s with the informed and generally sympathetic attitude which we almost take for granted today.

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, the IWC will hold an exhibition of European Bird Art at the Bank of Ireland Arts Centre in Dublin during 10th-26th September 1993, and will stage a conference and birdfair 'Celebrating Birds' in Howth, Co. Dublin, during 19th-21st November 1993.

The IWC combines for Ireland the roles carried out in Britain by the BTO, the RSPB and the county and regional clubs and societies—all with the number of staff reminiscent of the BTO's early days. It deserves support from anyone with any interest in or connection with Irish ornithology. The address to write to is Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin. *JIRS*

Unstreaked Acro ID

If you are a warbler buff, you will want to get hold of the latest issue of *Limicola* (vol. 7, no. 1, February 1993).

Over 60% of the issue (31/56 pages) is devoted to a paper by Karl Schulze-Hagen and Peter H. Barthel on the identification of European unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warblers. The text is in German, of course, but the captions to illustrations have short English versions and the paper has a detailed, one-page English summary. There is a fine selection of 29 pho-

tographs—all but four in colour and two colour plates.

The colour printing of the photographs and plates in the paper was sponsored by *Carl Zeiss Germany*, the sponsors of the British Birds Rarities Committee.

The subscription price of *Limicola* outside Germany is DM69, and back issues cost DM16. The address to write to is Thieplatz 6 A, OT Hollenstedt, D-3410 Northeln 12, Germany.

Christmas bloomer

We apologise for giving an incorrect solution to the Christmas puzzle *Brit. Birds* 85: page xiii in the December issue: 86: 126. The sequence should have been: 'LARK, lack, lock, rack, look, rock, ROOK . . . COOT, cook, hoot/loot, cock, hook/look, lock, hock, luck (dock), DUCK . . .'. The mistake was ours; all three winning entries were correct. Eds

OBC in Manchester

The Oriental Bird Club's all-day Manchester meeting will be held on 12th June, at the United Reform Church Hall, Elm Road, Gatley, Manchester. For further details, telephone Dick Filby on Norwich 0603 767757.

Beds Bird Club

How good, these days, to be able to give news of co-operation. After lengthy negotiations and a couple of lively public meetings, common sense has prevailed and the newly formed Bedfordshire Bird Club has formally been accepted as the ornithological section of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society. The spectre of two opposing groups in the county has, thus, been exorcised, to the benefit of both organisations, all the birdwatchers and the future of Bedfordshire ornithology.

Well done to all those concerned! Other counties please take note . . .

For membership details of both the BBC and the BNHS, write to Mary Sheridan, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard LU7 4R.

The sparrows fall?

Two or three years ago, House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* were a menace at my peanut feeders in winter, and chattered from the eaves in summer. No more. 'Fountains' is chirrupless. A purely local decline? Recently, unprompted, strangers have in conversation—on learning that I am a birdwatcher—asked me 'Where have all the sparrows gone?'

Not covered by the BTO's Common Birds

Census (because they were *too* common?), this decline, if there is one, has probably gone almost unnoticed and certainly is not properly documented. Has there been a population crash? How widespread is it? Has it affected urban as well as peripheral rural areas? Are *you* House Sparrows as frequent as they were a few years ago? (JTRS)

BoPs in USSR

Raptor-Link is a new, independent, three-times-a-year newsletter devoted to birds of prey and owls in the area of the former USSR.

The eight-page, first-ever issue, published in March, simultaneously in Russia and in the West, contains a total of 18 news items, with all text in both English and Russian. One report concerns the accidental killing of Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* in traps set on koga (artificial peat cones) for Arctic foxes *Alopex lagopus* (one trapper alone had killed 53 Snowy Owls); another concerns surveys of nesting Steller's Sea Eagles *Haliaeetus pelagicus* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* in northeast Siberia by means of a two-seater microlight.

A subscription to *Raptor-Link* costs £5 or \$7.50 (UK), £6.50 or \$10 (Europe) or £8 or \$12 (elsewhere); or add an extra £8 to cover bank charges if sending other currencies. Subscriptions should be sent to the editor/publisher, Eugene Potapov, c/o Edward Grey Institute for Field Ornithology, Department of Zoology, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS.

Pagham Harbour hide

A new hide, donated by *Kay Optical* (1962), has been installed at Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve, West Sussex. It is located on the Pagham Spit, giving excellent views over the harbour and shingle banks. Access is from Pagham Village (not the Sidlesham side) and is a short walk from the Pagham Spit car park (grid ref. SZ880962).

Tim Dean goes north

Tim Dean, Warden of Walney Nature Reserve since 1979, is leaving to take up a post with the RSPB in Orkney (his first love).

Tim has become well known among birdwatchers, especially in Cumbria, and has taken a lead in conservation and birdwatching within the area. Walney has developed greatly under his care, and he has published the book on *The Natural History of Walney Island* (1990), reviewed *Brit. Birds* 84: 521. (Contributed by John Wilson)

BOU at Losehill Hall

The British Ornithologists' Union found a splendid new conference venue in the centre of the Peak District for its spring conference on 'Reproductive competition: extra-pair paternity and intra-specific brood parasitism'. The enthusiasm of those investigating the mechanisms and implications of sperm competition created an exciting conference atmosphere, with very lively and constructive discussions after each formal contribution. The conference composition, with participants from more than a dozen countries, had been aided by the Union's new policy of providing small grants to enable some overseas delegates to attend.

Regular participants at other ornithological meetings would have been surprised to find

the relatively equal (3:2 male to female ratio at this conference. It is not, however, possible to report on the influence this may have had on the incidence of EPCs following the Saturday night ceilidh. Perhaps it was as well that we were already weary after the afternoon's jaunts among the region's peaks.

The permanent memory of this conference, however, will be the demonstration that the BOU is very much at the forefront of ornithology in Britain. Anyone who thinks otherwise should go to one of the Union's forthcoming conferences. For details, or to join the BOU, write to the Administrative Secretary, BOU, c/o The Natural History Museum, Sub-Department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire.

The last pigeon post

March 1993 saw the end of call-up and military-reservist status for France's three million or so racing and homing pigeons — both *Columba livia* — the end of a long and famous tradition which has involved not only professional, serving pigeons, but also a great many wartime conscripts. The sole military pigeon post is now with the 8th Signals Regiment, just outside Paris, with 100 birds on the strength.

'Alauda'

The French journal *Alauda*, published by the Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques, helpfully includes a contents list in English. The rarities report for 1991, compiled by Philippe J. Dubois, in the latest issue (volume 60, number 4) also includes an English summary. There is no colour, but the paper quality is much improved nowadays, so the black-and-white photographs are very well reproduced. For subscription details, write to Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Laboratoire d'Ecologie Générale, 1 avenue du Petit-Château, 91800 Brunoy, France.

'Suffolk Birds'

Proudly bearing on its cover the winner's 'rosette' as 'The Best Annual Bird Report 1990', following the success of *Suffolk Birds* last year (*Brit. Birds* 85: 209-308), the latest annual report runs to a massive 171 pages for just £5.00. As well as the excellent systematic list documenting 1991 records, there are papers on Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo*, Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus*, and breeding waders and waterfowl, and notes on 11 of the county's major rarities, with appropriate drawings and photographs. Great value! Copies of *Suffolk Birds 1992* can be obtained from The Editor, c/o The Museum, High Street, Ipswich IP1 1QH.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—Northeast

Dave Holman—East Anglia

Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland

David Tomlinson—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

Keith Vinicombe—Southwest

John Wilson—Northwest

'You the Jury'

This is a new feature, initially planned to run to six articles, in the magazine *Birdwatch*. Mock submissions to the British Birds Rarities Committee are published and readers are invited to judge whether to accept or reject the record as if they are members of the BBRC. In the following issue, BBRC members Dr Colin Bradshaw and Rob Hume give their verdict and reasons. The aim of this feature is to try to explain in simple terms and demonstrate the process of record assessment by the BBRC.

The first such hypothetical record claim, published in the April 1993 issue, relates to an Alpine Swift seen in Sussex on 3rd May 1992.

We — and also the BBRC's sponsors, *Carl Zeiss Germany* — welcome this venture by *Birdwatch*.

Senior BB subscriber

Major R. F. Rutledge, an Honorary Subscriber since 1986, admits to having been a *BB* subscriber for at least 69 years, since 1923, and perhaps earlier, since he has issues from 1919 and 1921. This beats R. B. Warren's and Stephen Marchant's records (*Brit. Birds* 85: 386; 86: 30) by a dozen years. We are grateful to John Barlee for drawing this to our attention.

New Recorders

Richard Allison, 10 Mulberry Close, Chesterton, Cambridge CB4 2AS, has taken over from Colin Kirtland as Recorder for the old county of Cambridgeshire.

John M. Clark, 4 Cygnet Court, Old Cove Road, Fleet, Hampshire GU13 8RL, has taken over from Eddie Wiseman as Recorder for Hampshire.

Steven J. Moon, Kenfig Reserve Centre, Ton Kenfig, Pyle, Mid Glamorgan CF34 4PL, has taken over from J. R. Smith as Recorder for Mid Glamorgan.

Silly corner

We enjoyed 'Piped Wagstall' in the British Steel Corporation's *Steel News*, but were mystified by the mention in the *Leicester Mercury* of the very rare Gibbet Trail seen at Rutland Water.

G. R. Walker has sent us this gem: 'The special Egyptian swallow is like its cousins but the whole of its underpants are red.' He spotted it in Swan Hellenic's *Nile Cruise handbook* (12th ed. 1989).



Diary dates

This list covers July 1993 to June 1994

29th July to 13th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions. The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

20th-22nd August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR, Eggleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire. Enquiries to Tim Appleton, Fishponds Cottage, Stamford Road, Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 8AB.

29th August ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB MEETING, Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

8th-10th September BOU AUTUMN MEETING, 'Diseases and parasites in birds,' Madingley Hall, Cambridge. Details from Dr Alistair Dawson, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE17 2LS.

11th-15th September FIRST EUROPEAN MEETING OF THE RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION/HAWK & OWL TRUST, University of Kent. Details from Dr Mike Nicholls, Programme Co-ordinator, Christ Church College, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1QU.

2nd October RSPB AGM, Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London. Details from Events Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

29th-31st October SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Badenoch Hotel, Aviemore. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

19th-21st November IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY CONFERENCE AND BIRDFAIR, 'Celebrating birds,' Howth, Co. Dublin. Details from IWC, Rintledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin.

19th-21st November SCOTTISH RINGERS' CONFERENCE, Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar. Details from Bernard Zonfrillo, 28 Brodie Road, Glasgow G21 3SB.

3rd-5th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM, 'Migration,' Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from BTO, The National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP21 2PU.

11th December OBC AGM, Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regent's Park, London (to be confirmed). Details from OBC.

7th-9th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE, Hayes Conference Centre. Details from Jacquie Clark, BTO.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

15th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

6th-10th April BOU CONFERENCE 'Bird Conservation in action,' Shuttleworth Agricultural College, Bedfordshire. Details from Nicola Crockford, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

8th-10th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND, Warwick University. Details from Events Department, RSPB.

Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3AJ



European news

This regular six-monthly feature summarises information for the whole of Europe and adjacent parts of the Western Palearctic to complement the records published in the annual reports of the British Birds Rarities Committee and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the periodic reports on scarce migrants in Britain and Ireland (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 85: 507-554; 86: 62-90; 85: 631-635).

Details of all recent records have been supplied by the official national correspondents (see list at end of this report), and relevant published records have also been extracted for earlier years from the major national journals.

These summaries aim to include all records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species; (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, even if common elsewhere in Europe.

This report includes records from 30 countries.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Records still awaiting formal ratification by the relevant national rarities committee are indicated by an asterisk.

Soft-plumaged/Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*/*P. madeira*/*P. jean*
NETHERLANDS First record: Camperduin, Noordholland, on 21th October 1992*.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* CANARY ISLANDS Census: 1,000 pairs in 1987.

Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* NORWAY Fifth record: adult at Lista fyr, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 9th May 1991 (previous four records were in 1867, 1968, 1984 and 1988).

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* ITALY Third or first record: Ladispoli, Rome, on 23rd May 1990 (two previous records dubious).

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* FRANCE Fourth record: Moëze, Charente-Maritime, on 1th December 1992* (second and third were on 15th October 1987 and on 16th August 1988).

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* SWEDEN Influxes: 75 in 1991, mostly in March and November (only 65 previous records; *Fau Fagelv.* 51: 19).

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus* EGYPT Second record since 1903: adult at Abu Simbel on 23rd-24th October 1992 (first was in 1988, *Comser* 3: 59-67; *Brit. Birds* 81: 2).

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* FRANCE Fourth and fifth records presumed escapes: Landes on 1th-6th September 1991 (*Audouin* 60: 219) and two at étang de Campagnol, Hérault, on 10th August 1992* (previous records were during August 1988 to April 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 411).

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* FAROE ISLANDS Third record: dead at Ryskivain, Suduroy, on 21th May 1990. SPAIN Recovery: 29-30 booming males in 1991, half in Catalonia; first breeding record for Mallorca: three booming males and juveniles at Albufera Lagoon in 1992 (cf. decline noted *Brit. Birds* 82: 321-322).

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* ICELAND Fourth record: 23rd June 1987 (*Bliki* 10: 19).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* FRANCE Northernly breeding records: pair in Marne and two pairs in baie de Somme after spring influx (*Brit. Birds*

86: 37). SPAIN Winter census for Iberian Peninsula: 152,000-160,000 in 1991/92 (*Airo* 3: 41-54).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* SPAIN Winter census for Iberian Peninsula: 9,700-9,900 in 1991/92 (*Airo* 3: 41-54).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* AUSTRIA Census: 1,000-1,100 pairs breeding in 1992.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* SWEDEN First confirmed breeding record since 1953: two adults and one young in Skåne during summer 1992.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* FRANCE Influx: 24 records involving 58 individuals, mostly during April-August 1991, including three pairs breeding in Camargue (*Alauda* 60: 201).

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* FRANCE Presumed escapes: Eure on 9th October 1990 (third in 1990; eight previous records involving five individuals; *Alauda* 60: 219; *Brit. Birds* 85: 445), baie de l'Aiguillon, Vendée, on 8th-10th October 1992*, and, probably same, at Beauvoir-sur-Mer, Vendée, on 6th January 1993*.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* MALTA Vagrants: flock of 38 in October 1992 (rare and irregular, but occurring more frequently in recent years).

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor* EGYPT First record: Abu Simbel on 27th November 1992.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* MALTA Influx: 25 in January 1993 (last influx in December 1984; *Brit. Birds* 78: 339).

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* SLOVENIA Second record in last 50 years: Cerkljiško jezero on 15th December 1991 (previous record was in March 1987).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 26,700 passing Dovns Klint, Langeland, on 3rd October 1992. SWEDEN Correction: first breeding was in 1971, not in 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 38).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* NORWAY Third and fourth records: Sellevoll, Andøy, Nordland, during 11th-14th May 1991, and Lorasleiret, Inderøy, Nord-Trøndelag, on 15th September 1991.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* SLOVENIA Second record in last 50 years: five at Ormoško jezero on 8th September 1991 (previous record was in March 1984).

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* ICELAND First breeding record: pair bred in 1990 (*Bliki* 12: 9-10).

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* POLAND Presumed escape: male from 24th December 1985 to 14th March 1986 (*Notatki Oru.* 29: 64).

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* FAROE ISLANDS Fifth record: male at Vestmanna, Streymoy, on 27th April 1992 (fourth was in 1984; *Brit. Birds* 77: 587).

American Wigeon *Anas americana* ICELAND Vagrants: three records in 1990, bringing total to 72 (*Bliki* 12: 22). LITHUANIA First record: male on Kursiu Marios Gulf at Ventės Ragas on 18th September 1991. SWEDEN Thirteenth record: adult male on 24th May 1991 (*Fågelv.* 51: 19).

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* FRANCE Tenth record this century: 1st-9th December 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 202). POLAND First record: male on 27th May 1987 (*Notatki Oru.* 30: 60).

Common Teal *Anas crecca* ICELAND Vagrants: five records of Nearctic race *carolinensis* in 1990, bringing total to 72 (*Bliki* 12: 23). NORWAY Third and sixth to ninth records of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: 16th April 1988, 15th-26th April 1991, 12th-31st May 1991, 25th-26th April 1992 and 23rd May 1992 (records in April 1989 and May 1990, *Brit. Birds* 86: 38, become fourth and fifth).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* ICELAND Twentieth record: female on 11th May 1990 (*Bliki* 12: 23; eighteenth and nineteenth were in June 1989, *Brit. Birds* 86: 38).

Garganey *Anas querquedula* FAROE ISLANDS Fifth record: male on Sandsvatn, Sandoy, on 5th May 1990.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* CANARY ISLANDS Second record and first for Tenerife: juvenile in October 1992*. ICELAND Eighth record: female on 2nd October 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 22). MOROCCO Ninth record: male at Oued Massa on 10th January 1993. NORWAY First record: adult male at Bjarangsoyra, Meløy, Nordland, from 19th June to 3rd July 1991. SWITZERLAND First and second records: males on 5th April 1978 and 24th April 1989 both now accepted as being of wild origin (*Oru. Beob.* 89: 260).

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* FAROE ISLANDS Fourth record: male and female on Hoyvíkstjørn on 2nd June 1988. MOROCCO Continued increase in winter: 12,472 in January 1988, 15,700 in January 1989, 23,254 in January 1990 and 26,742 in January 1991 (highest-ever winter count); second breeding record: female with three young at Sidi Bou

Rhaba Reserve on 2nd June 1992 (first breeding record was in 1971).

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* FRANCE Third to fifth records since 1981: male on 10th-17th August 1991 and probable juvenile in Oise from 22nd August to 2nd September 1991 (*Alda* 60: 202); one in Camargue on 30th December 1992*. MOROCCO Mid-winter census: 852 in January 1991, mainly at Lake de Sidi Bou Rhaba (478) and Oued Massa (350). SWITZERLAND First and second records (presumed escapes): 30th August to 6th September 1991 and 22nd September 1991 (*Orn. Beob.* 89: 259).

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* SPAIN Successful reintroduction project in Mallorca: at least 12 pairs bred and 26 young raised at Albufera Lagoon.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* FAROE ISLANDS Fifth record: male on Gróthusvatn, Sandoy, on 5th May 1990 (fourth was in November 1982, *Brit. Birds* 76: 567).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* FRANCE Vagrants: four males during January-May 1991 (21 previous records, involving 22 individuals; *Alda* 60: 202). SWEDEN Fourteenth and fifteenth records: adult male on 27th November 1991 (*Vår Fågel*, 51(7-8): 20), and single at Lake Rösjön, Skåne, on 13th-23rd January 1993*. SWITZERLAND Twelfth record: female on 17th March 1991; also in 1991, an overwintering male from December 1990 was seen in January and April (*Orn. Beob.* 89: 255).

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* POLAND First breeding record: female with seven young in Gdańsk on 29th June 1989.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* DENMARK Third summer record: female at Olsemagle Revle, Zealand, on 3rd-24th August 1992*. FRANCE Fifth record: subadult male at Plouguerneau, Finistère, on 22nd November and 19th-20th December 1992*.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* LITHUANIA First record: male on Kursiu Marjos Gulf at Ventes Ragas on 18th December 1991.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* ICELAND Twentieth and twenty-first records: male on 28th May to 23rd June 1990, and 2nd-3rd July 1990 (*Bliki* 12: 25). POLAND First record: adult male on 7th January 1988 (*Volatki Orn.* 31: 71). SPAIN Sixth record: male and female at Doñana, Huelva, on 6th February 1991 (previous records were in 1983 and 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224). SWEDEN Vagrants: adult males on 7th

May, 24th May and 17th June 1991 (32 previous records; *Vår Fågel*, 51: 20).

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* PORTUGAL First record: female at Sado Estuary from 24th January to 7th February 1993*.

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* FRANCE Third record this century: probable female on 2nd-30th December 1989 (*Alda* 60: 202).

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* BELARUS Increase in wintering population: 100-120 at Lukoml Power Station, Vitebsk region, in February 1993 (20-30 in 1981).

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus* FRANCE Third record: male at Rhinau, Bas-Rhin, from 11th November 1992 to at least 9th January 1993*. NORWAY Fourth record: Hoplafjorden and Hammervatnet, Levanger, Nord-Trøndelag, from 13th January to 20th April 1991. SWEDEN Presumed escape: male on 16th-17th May 1991 (*Vår Fågel*, 51: 30); others were seen in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 39).

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* ICELAND First breeding record: pair bred in 1990 (*Bliki* 12: 27). MOROCCO First record: male and three females at Merja Halloulia (also sighted at Merja Bagha, both localities north of Merja Zerga from early December 1992 to at least 16th January 1993*). PORTUGAL First record: Quinta do Lago development, Ria Formosa, Algarve, on 14th November 1991 (at least one possible previous record under investigation). SPAIN Increase in south and southeast: apparent interbreeding with White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala* in at least two instances.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* SPAIN Recovery continuing: 786 in January 1992. UKRAINE Vagrants: female on 23rd October 1985 (*Cat. Orn. West. Reg. Ukraine* 2: 21); another in April 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 10).

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 600-850 pairs in 1985-89. FRANCE High autumn passage numbers: 18,100 at Orgambideska, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, and 2,200 at montagne de la Serre, Puy-de-Dôme, in 1992. ICELAND Third record: 5th September 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 25).

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* NETHERLANDS Second record: Hazeldonk, Noordbrabant, on 21th October 1992*.

Black Kite *Mikus migrans* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 70-90 pairs in 1985-89. FRANCE Autumn passage: 12,100 at Orgambideska, Pyrénées-Atlantiques in 1992.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 30-50 pairs in 1985-89.

Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* POLAND Deletion: records in March and April 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 39) now rejected.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* POLAND Census: 210-240 pairs in 1992 (slow increase). SWEDEN Slow recovery: about 150 pairs hatched about 95 young in 1992. UKRAINE Census: 40-45 pairs in 1990-91.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* SPAIN Increase: up to 53 territories in Spanish Pyrenees in 1991 (cf. 40 pairs in 1986, *Brit. Birds* 81: 15).

Rüppell's Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* SPAIN Vagrant: one with Griffon Vultures *G. fulvus* near Valencia de Alcántara, Cáceres province, from April 1990 to June 1992, and perhaps same at Doñana National Park. Huelva, on 21st-22nd October 1992* (origin unknown).

Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* FRANCE Fifth record this century: Aude on 29th April 1991 (*Aloude* 60: 204); later record in Gruissan, Aude, on 15th October 1992* was probably one of four released in the Cévennes in recent reintroduction programme.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 900-1,200 pairs in 1985-89. NORWAY Fifth breeding record: pair raised three young in Ostfold county during 4th May to about 23rd July 1991 (fourth breeding record also in Ostfold county in 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 447).

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 50-80 pairs in 1985-89.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 20-30 pairs in 1985-89. POLAND Large increase: about 50 new breeding pairs in 1992, occupying new areas (Silesia, Lublin region) and new habitats (agricultural land, whereas previously occurred only in wetlands).

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 2,000-2,800 pairs in 1985-89.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 3,200-3,900 pairs in 1985-89. ICELAND Fourth record: 19th October 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 25).

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 9,500-13,000 pairs in 1985-89.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* HUNGARY First breeding record: one young fledged successfully on the Hortobágy in June 1992. SWEDEN Fifth record: 9th and 21st October 1991 (*Får Fågel*, 51: 20).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: three to six pairs in 1985-89. FRANCE Influx: Gruissan, Aude, on 10th August 1992*, immature at Saint-Denis-du-Payté, Vendée, on 13th-18th August 1992*, in baie de Seine, Seine-Maritime, on 20th August 1992*, at Frasnès, Doubs, on 12th September 1992*, adult at Daubensand, Bas-Rhin, on 30th September 1992*, juvenile at Gruissan on 12th October 1992* (twelfth to seventeenth records this century).

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* NORWAY Third and fourth records: adult male at Bostrand, Ballangen, Nordland, on 17th-19th May 1989 and second-year male showing characteristics of race *orientalis* at Brekken, Sor-Trondelag, on 22nd July 1991 (previous records were in August 1973 and July 1983).

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* NETHERLANDS First record: Leersum, Utrecht, on 30th May 1992.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* UKRAINE Census: 35-45 pairs in 1990-91.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 9,000-13,000 pairs in 1985-89.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* SWITZERLAND First record (presumed escape): 15th December 1990 (*Orn. Beob.* 89: 259).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* AUSTRIA First breeding record since 1982: small colony, with three pairs in eastern Austria. CZECH REPUBLIC Census: up to five pairs in 1985-89. ICELAND Third record: male on 18th April 1985 (*Bliki* 6: 43).

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* CZECH REPUBLIC Census total: 150-230 pairs in 1985-89.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* POLAND Fourth record: pale-phase near Wiekó on Baltic coast on 12th August 1992. SWEDEN Sixth record: Falsterbo, Skåne, on 19th-24th August 1992*.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* CZECH REPUBLIC Census: eight to 12 pairs in 1985-89. UKRAINE Census: 35-40 pairs in 1990-91.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* CZECH REPUBLIC Census: up to three pairs in 1985-89. ICELAND Third and fourth records: 16th Octo-

ber 1986 and 23rd December 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 26; 12: 27).

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* BELARUS Second winter record: two at Lukoml sewage-ponds in February 1993 (first record was in January 1954).

Corn Crane *Crex crex* FRANCE Decline: only 670 males in almost complete census in 1991.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni* SPAIN Seventh record: immature at Puerto de Santa Maria, Cádiz province, on 31st March 1990.

American Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica* CANARY ISLANDS First record: juvenile on Tenerife in October 1992*.

Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* FRANCE Vagrant: one shot at étang du Capes-stand, Hérault, in September 1992* (Spanish-ringed, from reintroduction scheme in Catalonia). SPAIN Successful reintroduction projects: breeding confirmed at Albufera de Mallorca, Balearic Islands, and at Aiguamolls de l'Empordà, Girona province, in 1992.

Common Crane *Grus grus* CZECH REPUBLIC Increasing: four to six pairs in northern Bohemia in 1990; one pair bred in western Bohemia in 1992 (cf. first breeding in Czechoslovakia in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 80: 421). PORTUGAL Winter population estimate: 2,076 in February 1992 (*Airo* 3: 55-58).

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* NETHERLANDS Correction: first record two adults in July-September 1989, *Brit. Birds* 84: 5, of which one presumably present until at least summer 1992 (now considered to have been escapes. SWEDEN Ninth record: 15th May 1991 (*Lär Fågelv.* 51: 21).

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipoides* NETHERLANDS Summering: Zwanerwater, Noord-holland, from 1th June to August 1992 (the first holding territory since last breeding in 1957).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* UKRAINE Vagrant: 22nd September 1984 (*Cat. Orn. West. Res. Ukraine* 2: 35).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* CROATIA First record: 31st May 1990 (*Acrocephalus* 55: 182). LATVIA First record: Nagļi, Rēzekne district, on 3rd August 1992. MOROCCO Second record: Oued Massa on 16th-18th November 1992* (first was in April 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 18).

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* FRANCE Sixth record: Finistère on 6th-11th February 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 206). (This species is amaz-

ingly scarce in Europe outside Britain and Ireland, with only four recent records notified to 'European news': Switzerland in December 1977, Romania in September 1985, Hungary in November-December 1986 and Spain in September 1988.)

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* POLAND First breeding record: female giving distraction display at Vistula mouth on 28th May 1992, female and two males there two days later, and juvenile in July.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* SWEDEN Sixth and eleventh records: adults on 7th August 1987 and 8th July 1991 (*Lär Fågelv.* 51: 21).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* FRANCE Tenth to twelfth records: adults on 29th-31st May 1991 and 27th August 1991, and juvenile on 17th September 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 207).

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* FRANCE Twenty-eighth record: 12th March 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 207). HUNGARY Third and fourth records: adults near Fülöpszállás on 24th-25th April 1992 and on the Hortobágy on 9th October 1992. ITALY High numbers: 12 at Pantelleria Airport on 16th September 1990. POLAND Fifth record: adult at Wysoka, near Pila, on 5th April 1992 (fourth was in April 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 11).

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* FRANCE Eighth record: adult at Pénestin, Morbihan, on 12th September 1992.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* FRANCE Seventh record: first-summer on 5th June 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 207). ICELAND Thirty-sixth to thirty-eighth records: 28th-30th July 1990, 29th July 1990 and 6th October 1990 (*Bliki* 12: 30). NORWAY Seventh record: Orin, Verdal and Rinnleiret, Levanger, Nord-Trøndelag, on 14th July 1991.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* FRANCE Seventh and eighth records: juveniles on 18th September 1991 and 27th-29th September 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 208).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Tenerife during September-October 1992*. DENMARK Fifteenth and sixteenth records: Kallogra, Lolland, on 8th-12th August 1992*, and Borreby Mose, Zealand, on 27th July to 1st August 1992*. FRANCE Vagrants: six in September 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 208) and 12 during August-November 1992. POLAND Tenth to twelfth records: 3rd-8th May 1989, 10th-20th September 1989 and 11th-

13th September 1989 (*Notatki Orn.* 27: 172; 29: 111; 32: 130). SWEDEN Vagrants: nine in 1991, one in May, two in July, one in August and five in September (also one late report, for July 1990; *Får Fågelv.* 51: 22).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Tenerife in October 1992*. FRANCE Vagrants: three in September-October 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 209). POLAND Sixth and seventh records: 11th August 1988 and 27th July 1989 (*Notatki Orn.* 31: 74; 32: 131); tenth record and first in spring: Biebrza Marshes on 20th May 1992 (eighth and ninth noted *Brit. Birds* 85: 450-451).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* FRANCE Twenty-third and twenty-fourth records: 15th-18th September 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 209) and Brenne on 18th-24th October 1992*.

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* GREECE Vagrants: two at Porto Lagos on 13th May 1988. MOROCCO Wintering: two in 1991/92 stayed until 2nd February 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 451); in winter 1992/93, two from 10th November 1992 to at least 16th January 1993. (We are publishing all records received of this species.)

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* ICELAND Fifth record: 16th September 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 30).

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* FRANCE First breeding record: pair in Brière, Loire-Atlantique, in 1992. ICELAND Second record: 7th May 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 30).

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* FRANCE Fifth record: juvenile on Ouessant, Finistère, on 7th-18th September 1992*.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* NORWAY First record: first-winter at Molen and Omlid-stranda, Larvik, Vestfold, on 11th October and from 19th October 1992 to 23rd March 1993*.

(plates 76 & 81). (First Finnish record was in September 1983. *Brit. Birds* 77: 237.)

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* FRANCE Vagrants: five records involving at least six individuals in September-October 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 209).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* SWITZERLAND Influx: four in September-December 1991 (*Orn. Beob.* 89: 256).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* SLOVENIA Second record this century: two at Ptujsko jezero on 22nd October 1989.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* SWITZERLAND Influx: at least nine and perhaps over 60, mostly in September 1991 (*Orn. Beob.* 89: 256; cf. 30 records in France involving at least 149 individuals during August-November 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 451-452).

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* LATVIA Fifth record: off Salacgrīva, Limbaži district, on 2nd March 1992 (previous records were in September/October 1967, 1977 and 1983).

White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus* EGYPT Large concentration: about 4,500 at Hurghada on 21st October 1992.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* AUSTRIA First or second record: adult at Rheindelta, Lake of Constance, Vorarlberg, on 30th September and 2nd October 1992 (first record under review). ISRAEL Winter influx: total of 1,500-2,000 during winter 1992/93, including concentration of about 1,100 in Bet Shean Valley, northern Israel, during January-February 1993. POLAND Fifth and sixth records: immature on 30th September 1989 (*Notatki Orn.* 32: 133) and adult at Warta River, near Kolo, on 5th June 1992. UKRAINE Vagrant: 15th August 1985 (*Cat. Orn. West. Res. Ukraine* 2: 36).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* FRANCE Twelfth and fourteenth records: first-winter on 15th December 1990 (*Alauda* 60: 241), and second-

76. First-winter Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*, Norway, October 1992 (*Håkon Heggeland*)



winter at Ambouts-Cappel, Nord, on 8th-13th November 1992*.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* HUNGARY First record: adult winter near Korosládány on 19th September 1992. SPAIN Fourth record: first-winter at Delta del Llobregat, Barcelona, from 26th December 1990 to 15th January 1991. SWEDEN Seventh record: adult on 19th-21st July 1991 (*Far Fagel*: 51: 23).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* GIBRALTAR Second and third records: immature at Europa Point on 10th April 1992 and adult on 16th August 1992: first was in November 1987, *Alectoris* 7: 22; *Brit. Birds* 81: 331.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* FRANCE Fourth record: adult on île de Noirmouier, Vendée, on 14th August 1992*.

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* GIBRALTAR First record: juvenile on 17th August 1992: only previous records noted in 'European news' have related to Israel, Jordan and Tunisia, *Brit. Birds* 83: 12; 84: 7.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* SLOVENIA Second and third records: Rače Ponds on 11th April 1990 and Sečovlje Salinas on 10th-31st March 1991: first was in July 1989.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* EGYPT First record since 1981: up to two second-winters at Montazah Harbour, Alexandria, on 23rd January 1993: last record was in November 1981, Meininger & Goodman, 1989, *The Birds of Egypt*. MOROCCO High numbers: 3,138 along Atlantic coast between Layoune and the Baie de Cintra, Western Sahara, in mid-winter census during 12th-18th January 1993. SPAIN Dramatic increase continuing: 6,714 pairs in 1992 at breeding colony on Ebro Delta established in 1981: cf. *Brit. Birds* 83: 226). SWITZERLAND Deletion: December 1986 record (*Brit. Birds* 81: 331) now rejected (*Orn. Beob.* 89: 259).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* FRANCE Vagrants: seven records in 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 211). GIBRALTAR Second record: adult at Europa Point, on 21st June 1992: first was in December 1983, *Alectoris* 7: 53). ICELAND Vagrants: seven records in 1990, bringing total to 35 (*Bliki* 12: 32). MOROCCO Twelfth to fourteenth records: first-summerers at Oued Sebou estuary on 2nd-7th May 1992 and at Oued Sons estuary on 12th-13th July 1992, and adult at Larache saltmarshes on 8th November 1992 and 22nd January 1993. POLAND Fourth record: 17th December 1988 (*Notatka Orn.* 31: 76). SPAIN Vagrants: many records during

recent winters, with up to 16 different individuals at Gijón bay, Asturias province, in 1989/90. SWITZERLAND Deletions: records on 1st-21th December 1981, 29th January 1985 and 29th January 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 325) now rejected (*Orn. Beob.* 89: 259), so species removed from Swiss list.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* SPAIN Slight increase at only Mediterranean colony: 11 pairs on Ebro Delta in 1992: cf. 13 pairs in 1981, *Brit. Birds* 80: 12).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* CANARY ISLANDS Census: 1,000-1,700 pairs in 1987 (*Seabird* 11: 55-59). FRANCE First record of American race *smithsonianus*: first-winter on 21th January 1993*.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* SLOVAKIA First record: shot in Třeboň pond basin, southern Bohemia, on 7th July 1990. POLAND Third record: 27th December 1989 (*Notatka Orn.* 32: 133; January 1990 record, *Brit. Birds* 84: 7, becomes fourth).

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* NETHERLANDS Third record: second-winter at IJmuiden, Noordholland, on 21st-27th November 1992. SWEDEN Ninth and tenth records: one dead at Vittangi, Lapland, on 23rd November 1992*, and one in Udda, Bohuslän, on 20th-23rd January 1993*.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* BELARUS Second record: seven at Volma, Cherven district, Minsk region, on 9th June 1989: first was in autumn 1918.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* SLOVENIA Third record in last 50 years: Sečovlje Salinas on 9th July 1992: previous records were in May 1986 and May 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 153).

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandwichensis* ICELAND Third record: 13th April 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 32). SPAIN Increase in only Iberian colony: 1,131 pairs breeding on Ebro Delta in 1992: first breeding in 1961 and 330 pairs in 1981, *Brit. Birds* 82: 327).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* BELARUS First record: second-year at Lake Chereya, Chashniki district, Vitebsk region, on 25th June 1990: ringed as nestling in Punku-Pori, Finland.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* SWEDEN Sixth record: Skatelovsljorden, Småland, on 1th-6th October 1992*: dead on 10th. UKRAINE Census: 40-45 pairs in 1990-91.

Little Auk *Alle alle* FRANCE Influx: 167 in October-November 1991: and also nine in January-March and four in December, (*Aulauda* 60: 213).

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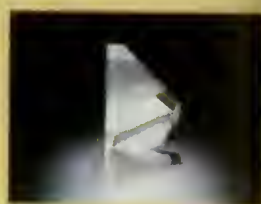


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Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* POLAND Second record since 1908: four at Lesko, southeast Poland, on 25th April 1992 (previous record was in April 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 231).

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Lanzarote in April 1992.

African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea* EGYPT Fourth and fifth records outside Gebel Elba area: at Abu Simbel on 23rd October 1992 and 27th October 1992.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* SWEDEN Ninth record: adult on 19th October 1991 (*Vår Fågelv.* 51: 24).

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* GREECE Fifth record: Skala, Kefallinia Island, on 20th October 1992.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* CANARY ISLANDS Feral breeding: population estimated to be 50-75 pairs. SLOVAKIA New feral breeder: in 1985, one pair with four young escaped in Sázava town, central Bohemia; these birds formed the basis of a breeding colony near Sázava river, where in 1986 there were two pairs and six young, and, by March 1990, 87 wild-breeding birds (in 1987, 11 additional birds added into the colony by a parrot-fancier); all nests were in hazel *Corylus*, mostly 2 m above ground level.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* MOROCCO Third breeding record: fledged juvenile being fed by Magpie *Pica pica* in Sous valley, near Taroudant, on 29th April 1992 (two previous breeding records, also in Sous valley, were in 1990 and in 1992, *Brit. Birds* 86: 42). SLOVENIA First record: Sčovlje Salinas on 2nd-5th May 1992.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* SWEDEN Vagrant: one dead at Rutvik, Luleå, Norrbotten, on 3rd November 1992, had been seen alive a few days earlier (extinct as a breeder in Sweden; much farther north than any previous find, about 112 km south of Arctic Circle—perhaps northernmost world record?).

Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* ISRAEL Status revision: one overwintering in Eilat December-February 1992/93 (also one in January 1990, and six in winter 1991/92 in southern Israel, chiefly Eilat); these records apparently result partly from better knowledge of separation from pale eastern form of Eurasian Scops Owl *O. scops* (see pages 286-287 and plates 77-80), and suggest that Striated Scops may be a not uncommon winterer in desert regions of Israel.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* DENMARK Small influx: 11th July 1992*, 14th July to 10th August 1992*, 22nd November 1992*, 6th December 1992* and 'during December 1992*'. FAROE ISLANDS First record since 1900: female dead at Hvannasund, Vidoy, on 24th October 1990. SWEDEN Best winter since great irruption in 1962/63: more than 20 in winter 1992/93.

Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa* SWEDEN Southernmost breeding record: Västmanland in 1991.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* AUSTRIA Best breeding season for years: at least 19 pairs in area of Lake Neusiedl, Burgenland (Austria's only breeding place), in 1992 (up to five pairs in other recent years).

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* FRANCE Second record outside breeding range: île de Ré, Charente-Maritime, on 9th January 1993*.

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* EGYPT Fourth and southernmost record of race *cyanophrys*: Sharm El Sheikh, South Sinai, on 19th November 1992.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* ICELAND Third record: 6th-7th September 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 33).

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* LATVIA Increase: now widespread, and species no longer considered by Rarities Committee (first breeding was in 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 289).

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* SLOVENIA Third record this century: Ljubljansko barje on 21st April 1991 (previous records were in April 1976 and April 1978).

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* MALTA Vagrants: up to five on Gozo in last week of December 1992 (last recorded in 1980).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* BELGIUM Vagrant: 16th September 1990 (*Aves* 28: 147). DENMARK High numbers: about 40 during autumn 1992. FRANCE Vagrants: 30th April to 2nd May 1991 and two or three in September 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 213). POLAND Vagrants: three on 29th September 1987, 15th April 1988, 5th May 1988, two on 19th September 1988, 20th-22nd September 1988 and 18th October 1988, 3rd April 1989 and 14th May 1989 (23 previous records; *Notatki Om.* 29: 63, 145; 31: 80; 32: 136).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* POLAND Vagrant: 16th September 1988 (*Notatki Om.* 31: 80).



77 & 79. Top left and bottom left, Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (approaching *O. s. turanicus* or *turanicus* \cong *cycladium*), Eilat, Israel, October 1992
(H. Shirhai)

78 & 80. Top right and bottom right, Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei*, Eilat, Israel, December 1992 (top)/March 1992 (bottom)
(H. Shirhai)



Separation of Striated Scops Owl from Eurasian Scops Owl Generally, Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* differs from Eurasian Scops *O. scops* in having paler/greyer and cleaner facial disc; indistinct/lacking whitish horizontal cross bands (as shown on most Eurasian Scops) on underpart feathers; upperparts never show any distinct rufous colour or white spots (as common in varying degree on most Eurasian Scops); large pale speckling of outer scapulars (i.e. shoulder-straps) are predominantly warm buff, never whitish (but often pale cream/sandy) like most Eurasian Scops. Striated Scops Owl's foot feathering usually extends farther down onto bases of toes (unlike that on Eurasian Scops, which is always limited to tarsus); and its central tail feathers have only two to four broad pale bars (instead of the narrower, five to seven bars on Eurasian Scops) visible beyond uppertail-coverts, with about 1 cm of the feather tip without bar, but uniformly/faintly vermiculated grey (continuously barred to tip on Eurasian Scops). In general, Striated Scops is paler/greyer/sandier, with better-developed/defined longitudinal feather-centre streaks.

HADORAM SHIRIHAI

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Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* NORWAY Second record: juvenile ringed at Slevdalsvann, Lista, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 21st September 1991 (first was on 29th September 1976; first Swedish record was on 5th-20th September 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 457).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* LATVIA First record of black-headed race *feldegg*: male at Nagli, Rezekne district, on 12th May 1982 (cf. first Estonian record in 1971, first Finnish record in 1985 and first Dutch record in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 329; 83: 227).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* EGYPT Third record: first-winter at Sharm El Sheikh on 17th-18th October 1992. POLAND Small spring influx: four between 23rd April and 16th May 1992 in south (previous spring influx on Hel Peninsula in 1988).

Garden Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* FRANCE Presumed escape: Camargue from 5th October 1992 into early 1993 at least.

Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* EGYPT First record since 1982: 77 km west of Alexandria on 22nd January 1993 (first Jordanian records this century were in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 84: 9).

Siberian Accentor *Prunella montanella* DENMARK First record: first-year male ringed at Christianso, Bornholm, on 5th October 1992* (other recent European records have been one in 1976, at least nine during 1986-88 and one in Sweden in October 1991, *Brit. Birds* 83: 14; 85: 457).

Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* FRANCE Tenth record: Bouches-du-Rhône on 22nd May 1991 (*Aulauda* 60: 213).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* CZECH REPUBLIC Second breeding record for Bohemia: nest with five young near Třeboň town, southern Bohemia, in 1991 (cf. first breeding in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 227).

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* POLAND Deletion: record in August 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 336) now rejected.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* FRANCE Twelfth record of race *stejnegeri/maura*: immature on Ouessant, Finistère, on 9th-10th October 1992*.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* DENMARK Third record: female at Christianso, Bornholm, on 7th October 1992*. NETHERLANDS Second and third records: first-winter male at Petten, Noordholland, on 23rd-26th October 1992, and first-winter female at Katwijk, Zuidholland, on 31st October to 4th November 1992 (plates 86 & 88).

Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cyprica* EGYPT Vagrants: two at Ayoun Mousa, South Sinai, on 2nd and 15th October 1992, and one at Abu Simbel on 24th October 1992.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* FRANCE Sixth record: male from 31st December to 17th January 1993*. NORWAY Second to fourth records: adult males at Steinodden, Lista, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 27th March 1989, and at Arnestangen, Raelingen, Åkershus, on 8th May 1991, and juvenile male at Utsira, Rogaland, on 3rd October 1992 (plate 85).

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* ICELAND Fourth to eighth records: 8th November 1981, 20th October 1985, 26th September 1986 and



15th October 1986 (*Bliki* 1: 31; 6: 52; 7: 38), and at Hafurbjarnarstaðir á Miðnesi, Gull., on 24th October 1992*.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* FRANCE Third record this century: adult male in Paris on 21st March 1990 (*Alauda* 60: 213).

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* NORWAY Sixth record of race *eunomus*: adult male at Groda, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 15th-20th April 1992 (previous five were in October and November 1889, October 1895, November 1908 and March 1959).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* FRANCE Eleventh record: first-winter showing characters of black-throated race *atrogularis* on 1st January 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 214). LATVIA Third record: male of race *atrogularis* at Pape, Liepāja district, on 29th October 1991 (previous two records were in December 1909 and May 1981). NORWAY Fourteenth record of race *atrogularis*: juvenile male ringed at Utsira, Rogaland, on 1st-9th October 1991.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* LATVIA Winter influx: flocks of up to 500 widespread in November-December 1992. SWEDEN Winter influx: huge flocks in south in 1992/93.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* EGYPT Fourth record: El Tur, South Sinai, on 22nd October 1992.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* MOROCCO Vagrant south of breeding range: Oued Ez-Zehar estuary, about 60 km south of Tantan, on 18th May 1992.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* NORWAY Fourth record: juvenile ringed at Slevdalsvann, Lista, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 14th-15th September 1992 (first to third were in September 1986, September 1988 and October 1988, *Vår Fuglefauna* 11: 87-95; 13: 131-143; 14: 135-150; *Brit. Birds* 84: 233).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* NORWAY Third record: juvenile ringed at Utsira, Rogaland, on 6th October 1991 (plate 84; first and second records were in September 1980 and September 1982, *Brit. Birds* 75: 270; 81: 20).

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* ITALY First

record: juvenile ringed in Po Delta, Sacca di Scordovari, on 1st September 1988.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* EGYPT First winter records: two at El Tur, South Sinai, on 22nd October 1992, and single 77 km west of Alexandria on 22nd January 1993.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* EGYPT Second record: Hurghada on 20th October 1992 (first was in March 1988, *Brit. Birds* 85: 459). ESTONIA First record: trapped near Võiste, Pärnu District, on 10th August 1992. POLAND Census: about 7,640 singing males, mainly in north and east.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* FAROE ISLANDS Third record: dead on boat at sea east of the Faroes about May 1992.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* AUSTRIA First record: trapped at Illmitz at Lake Neusiedl, Burgenland, on 16th August 1992. BELGIUM First and second records: 13th June 1989, and 2nd September 1989 (*Oriolus* 58: 47), so record on 8th September 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 44) is third, not first. DENMARK Fourth record: Husby Sø, W-Jutland, on 17th September 1992*. ESTONIA Second record: trapped at Vaibla, Viljandi District, on 11th August 1992 (first record was in July 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 233). HUNGARY Second record: ringed near Fenékpuszt, Lake Balaton, on 23rd September 1992* (first record was in August 1978). ISRAEL Fourth record: one ringed in Eilat in October 1992 (plate 83). LATVIA Apparently breeding: four juveniles trapped at Pape, Liepāja district, in August 1987, July 1988 (two) and August 1990, and adults with brood patches in July 1987 and August 1988.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* FRANCE First record of eastern race *fuscus*: Mainc-et-Loire on 20th May 1990 (*Alauda* 60: 214).

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* ISRAEL Fifth record: one ringed in Nir David, northern Israel, on 6th June 1992.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* ANDORRA Third record this century: adult male singing at Engolasters on 19th June 1992 (previous

81. First-winter Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*, Norway, October 1992 (*Håkon Heggland*)
82. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* on nest, Latvia, summer 1988 (see *Brit. Birds* 82: 19) (*Erik Hansson*)

83. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Israel, October 1992 (*H. Shirihai*)

84. First-winter Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Norway, October 1991 (*Håkon Heggland*)

The inclusion of plates 77-88 in colour has been subsidised by a donation from Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd



two records also adult males, on 12th May 1990 and 25th June 1990; only other record was in 1889, *Ibis* 6: 520-552).

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* FRANCE Eighth to tenth records since 1981: three in September-October 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 215).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* FRANCE Sixth and seventh records: 3rd-4th September 1991 and 16th October 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 215). NORWAY First breeding record: pair raised at least two young at Jomfruland, Telmark, during June and July 1991 (about twenty-sixth record for species; cf. first breeding in 1990 in Denmark and Germany, *Brit. Birds* 86: 45).

Two-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* SWEDEN First record: 5th July 1991, treated as race of Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides plumbeitarsus* (*Vår Fågelv.* 51: 28).

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* DENMARK Vagrants: two in autumn 1992. FRANCE Vagrants: two in 1991, on 22nd and 27th October 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 215). POLAND Fourteenth record: 9th October 1986 (*Notatki Orn.* 29: 146).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* BELGIUM Vagrant: 29th September 1990 (*Aves* 28: 147). DENMARK Vagrants: about seven in autumn 1992. EGYPT First record of race *lumei*: Sharm El Sheikh on 18th October 1992 (five previous records of *P. inornatus*). FAROE ISLANDS Nineteenth and twentieth records: two on Nólsoy on 30th September 1990. FRANCE Vagrants: total of 22 in 1991, all September-October apart from one in Var from 6th January to 3rd February (*Alauda* 60: 215-216). LATVIA Vagrants: only two trapped at Pape in autumn 1992, both on 25th September (highest-ever numbers were 30 caught in autumn 1988). MALTA Twenty-second and twenty-third records: two in October 1992 (last recorded in 1990). POLAND Vagrants: four in September 1986, 30th September 1987, four in September-October 1988 (33 previous records; *Notatki Orn.* 29: 146; 30: 68; 31: 81).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* DENMARK Eighth and ninth records: ringed at Hanstholm, NW-Jutland, at beginning of Oc-

tober 1991* and ringed at Christianso, Bornholm, on 25th September 1992*. NETHERLANDS Correction: fifth record, on 6th-8th November 1990, reconsidered and now accepted as Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* (sixth and seventh records of Radde's Warbler now become fifth and sixth (cf. *Brit. Birds* 85: 460)*. NORWAY Third record: Utsira, Rogaland, on 6th October 1991 (plate 87; first and second records were in October 1981 and October 1987, *Brit. Birds* 82: 352).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* DENMARK Twenty-fifth record: ringed at Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, on 20th-21st October 1992*. FRANCE Tenth record: île de Noirmoutier, Vendée, on 20th October 1992*. LITHUANIA First record: trapped at Ventcs Ragas bird-ringing station on 22nd October 1991. NETHERLANDS Thirteenth record: 6th-8th November 1990, previously accepted as Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* (*Brit. Birds* 85: 460), so record in late November to December 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 45) becomes fourteenth. NORWAY Third and fourth records: ringed at Hegrestad, Rogaland, on 20th October 1990, and juvenile ringed at Slevdalsvann, Vest-Agder, on 7th October 1992 (first and second records were in October 1974 and October 1984).

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus* SWEDEN First record: 10th October 1991 (*Vår Fågelv.* 51: 29), not 19th October as noted earlier (*Brit. Birds* 86: 45).

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* EGYPT First record of race *tristis*: Hurghada on 26th October 1992.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* EGYPT Fourth record: three at Montazah Gardens, Alexandria, on 23rd January 1993.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* CANARY ISLANDS First record for Tenerife: juvenile in October 1992*. MOROCCO Eighth, and first winter record: Meski on 12th December 1992*.

Azure Tit *Parus cyanus* FINLAND See Sweden. SWEDEN. The hybrid Azure × Blue Tit *P. caeruleus* ringed in Landsort in October 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 461) was controlled in Vertsilä, eastern Finland, on 18th April 1992.

85. First-winter male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Norway, October 1992 (*Andrew W. Clarke*)

86. First-winter male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Netherlands, October 1992 (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*)

87. Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, Norway, October 1991 (*Håkon Heggland*)

88. First-winter female Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Netherlands, November 1992 (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*)

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* BELGIUM
Vagrant: 10th-20th January 1990 (*Aves* 28: 148).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* NORWAY
Third and fifth to seventh records (also first breeding record): adult female at Sele, Rogaland, on 27th August 1989, fledgling ringed at Slevdalsvann, Vest-Agder, on 20th-21st July 1991, adult male there on 22nd July 1991, and another fledgling ringed on 29th July (record in April 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 461, becomes fourth).

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* FAROE ISLANDS
Fifth record: Tórshavn, Streymoy, on 1st July 1990.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* FRANCE
Fourth record: Corse-du-Sud on 1st-3rd November 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 216). ITALY First record: juvenile in Ladispoli, Rome, on 22nd September 1988. NORWAY Fifth record: Utsira, Rogaland, on 7th October 1991.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* SPAIN Third record this century and first for Balearic Islands: male at Puerto Pollensa, Mallorca, on 26th April 1991* (first and second records were in 1961 and 1962).

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* SPAIN Census results for Madrid province: 1,000-1,100 individuals during breeding season (*Ardeola* 38: 91-99).

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* FRANCE
Sixth to eighth records: Corse-du-Sud on 3rd May 1991 and 4th May 1991, and Camargue on 3rd August 1991 (*Alauda* 60: 218).

Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus* FRANCE Probable escape: male in Camargue on 5th-7th July 1991* ('cf. range expansion in northern Senegal, southern Mauritania').

Avadavat *Amandava amandava* EGYPT Range extension: Luxor on 16th October 1992 and two there on 22nd October 1992 (southernmost records along Nile Valley, representing 400-km extension).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* ICELAND
Fourth and fifth records: 4th October 1984 and 20th October 1985 (*Bliki* 5: 44; 10: 44).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* EGYPT Winter vagrants: 'tens' at Montazah Gardens, Alexandria, on 23rd January 1993 (last significant numbers recorded in the 1960s).

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* SWITZERLAND Deletions: records in January 1953 and December 1983 now rejected (*Om. Beob.* 89: 260), so species removed from Swiss list.

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* LATVIA
First record: female of race *cabaret* trapped at Pape on 15th October 1990.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* POLAND
Influx: 18 records concerning up to 138 individuals in January-March 1989 (*Notatki Om.* 32: 138-139).

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* FAROE ISLANDS Fifth record: dead at Fuglafjordur, Eysturoy, on 20th June 1990.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* FRANCE Summer records: subadult males singing in Haute-Savoie on 10th-11th June 1991, and in Nord on 12th-30th June 1991 and 15th June 1991 (also juvenile on Ouessant in October 1991, *Alauda* 60: 218; these details replace those given *Brit. Birds* 85: 15). SWITZERLAND Probable breeding: singing males at six localities in 1991, with female and two juveniles at one site, noted as 'possible breeding' (*Om. Beob.* 89: 258, 260) [but this seems an unduly cautious interpretation].

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* ITALY Seventh record: three near San Giuliano's Lake on 21st December 1990.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* MALTA Seventh record: January 1993 (last recorded in 1972).

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* ICELAND
Third record: 2nd-3rd November 1988 and, probably same, on 12th-20th November 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 46).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* SWEDEN
Eighth record: first-year female on Utklippan island, Blekinge, from 23rd October to 7th November 1992*.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* MOROCCO
Ninth record: 8th November 1991 (*Poephyrio* 4: 112; sixth and seventh records were in 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 14).

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* SWEDEN Fourth record: 8th-9th July 1991 (*Vår Fågelk.* 51: 31).

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* GREECE
First record for Ionian Islands: at least three on Corfu on 7th-9th June 1991.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* ICELAND Third record: 8th May 1988 (*Bliki* 10: 47).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* SPAIN Third record: male trapped at Sitges, Barcelona province, on 16th October 1992* (first and second were in 1957 and 1969).

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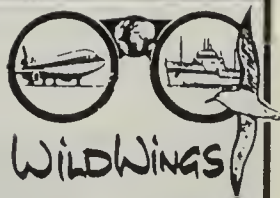
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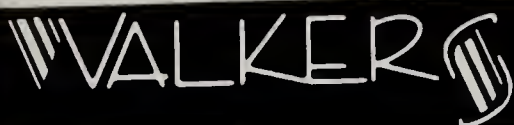
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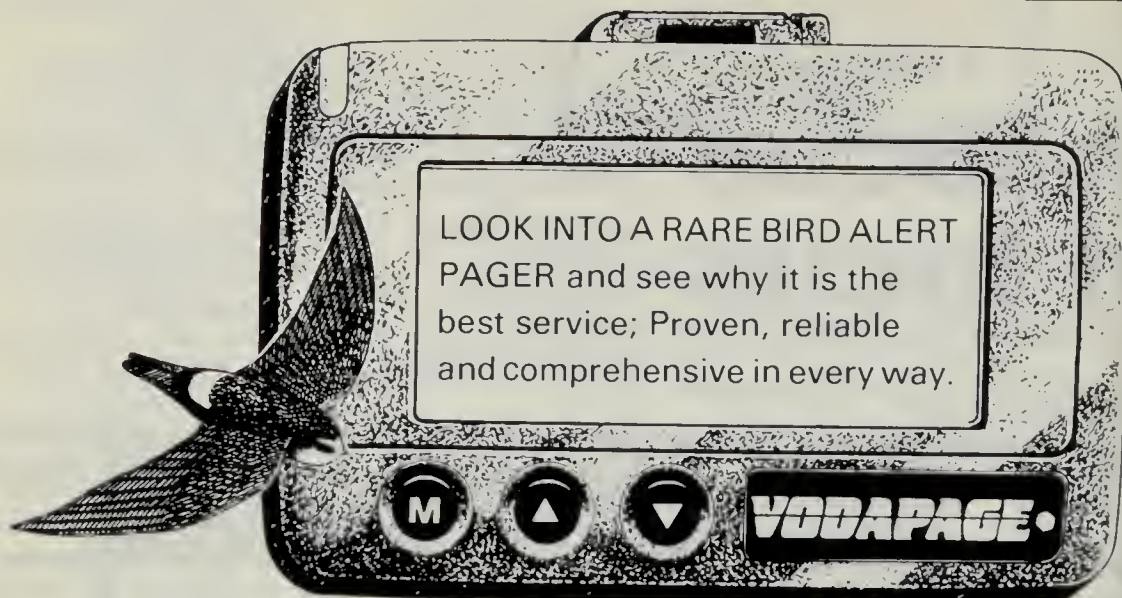
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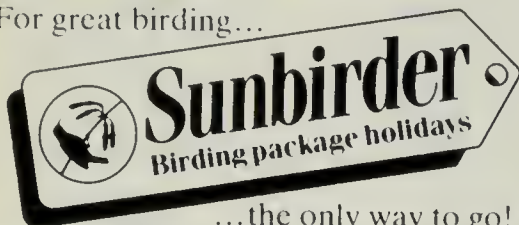
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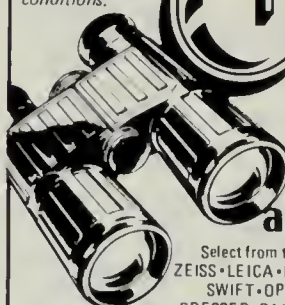
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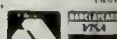
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British Birds

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The Red Kite in Wales: setting the record straight

Peter Davis

It has been generally accepted for the past 80 years that the British population of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* reached its lowest cbb about 1905, and then recovered, slowly and hesitantly, under protection. There is now good reason to suppose that in fact the population was at its lowest about 30 years later.

The Handbook of British Birds (vol. 3, 1940) reported that only five individuals were known in Wales in 1905. This was based on a statement by E. G. B. Meade-Waldo (1910) that there were only two pairs and an odd bird in 1905. Our pre-eminent Welsh kite historian, the late Col. H. Morrey Salmon, refuted Meade-Waldo's statement in this journal in 1957, pointing out that Meade-Waldo himself (quoting J. H. Salter) had already published a higher figure of three breeding pairs and one or two odd birds in 1905, and that this referred only to the protected area in the upper Tywi valley. Morrey Salmon concluded, from the evidence available to him, that there were at least nine and probably 12 or more individuals surviving in 1905. He did not, however, question the basic assumption that kites were rarer in the first decade of this century than at any subsequent time.

More than a decade ago, the entomologist Adrian Fowles drew my attention to the wealth of records of Red Kites in the diaries of that remarkable naturalist Prof. J. H. Salter, chief protagonist of kite protection in Wales at the beginning of the present century. Assuming that the details were already well known to Morrey Salmon, I came only lately to the original

diaries, now held by the National Library of Wales. It soon became apparent that they contained much material of which Morrey Salmon had remained unaware. Salter taught botany at the University College in Aberystwyth from 1891 to 1908. His interest in the remnant kite population, and concern for its survival in the face of persecution, led him to interview many landowners, keepers, farmers, and others throughout Central Wales, meticulously recording all he could learn about kites. He also searched widely for the birds himself, investigating the reports which reached him, and he noted all the observations of his wide circle of correspondents. Inevitably there are many negative reports, but these, too, are of value. Salter was obliged to live abroad from 1908 to 1916, owing to his wife's delicate health, but after her death he returned to Aberystwyth in 1923. He immediately resumed his interest in the kites, making many enquiries to bridge the gap since his departure, particularly outside the main centre of kite protection in the Tywi valley. Again he made his own contribution in the field, locating kites that were unknown to the 'official' watchers.

It is largely through Salter, with his orderly and enquiring scientific approach, that we have any coherent record of Welsh kites from the late nineteenth century until the early 1930s. The local organisers of kite protection between 1905 and the 1930s, Rev. D. Edmondson Owen (died 1922) and Rev. W. J. Constable (retired 1937), as well as the national co-ordinator E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, who operated from 1905 until his death in 1934, were all entirely praiseworthy in their dedication to preserving the kite, but all regrettably unsystematic and erratic in their collection and interpretation of the records. It fell to Salter, close confidant of Edmondson Owen and Meade-Waldo, and evidently much respected by them, to rationalise the data. He published a very condensed account of his conclusions in 1930. That paper, and an incomplete volume of notes about kites found among Salter's diaries after he died in 1942, formed the bulk of the Salter records available to Morrey Salmon when he compiled his own massive unpublished digest of Welsh kite records, between about 1950 and 1970.

Since 1970, a good deal of other additional material has emerged, most notably the diaries and correspondence of Miss D. T. Raikes (died 1976), who searched actively for kites all over Central Wales in the 1930s, and who succeeded Constable as local organiser, during 1938-49. She had provided only the barest summary of her activities during her lifetime (much to Morrey Salmon's indignation!), but her archive is a useful one. A certain quantity of records from other naturalists' diaries, and dates from egg-collectors and their clutches, has also come to light in recent years.

Quite apart from the additional records, some reassessment of the earlier material is needed, particularly that concerning the appearance of kites in East Radnorshire. This area, close to the English border, produced reports of considerable numbers of kites, and rumours of several nests, between the late 1920s and the mid 1940s. This was taken to represent an expansion of the native population into a new area, but seems more likely to have been a totally unrelated phenomenon. In 1927-28 and again in 1934-35, the Liverpool egg-dealer C. H. Gowland arranged for batches of Red Kite eggs from Spain to be placed in nests of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in the

Builth Wells area. A good many young are said to have fledged, though apparently no systematic records were maintained (Gowland 1947). Importations ceased with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. There can be little doubt that the records in East Radnor derived largely if not entirely from these introductions. There is no way that the known production of young by the native kites could have supplied the numbers reported in Radnor, reputed to have been into double figures in the early 1930s. Nor is there any indication that Spanish birds joined the native stock. The Radnor records petered out during the 1940s, and they are not heard of again.

Thanks to Salter and to Morrey Salmon, we can now trace the history of Red Kites in Wales, between about 1890 and 1950, with some precision. It is clear that, throughout this period, the whole population was never counted in any one year, yet most kite localities and probably the great majority of territorial pairs were recorded intermittently, whether by naturalists, collectors, or local people. Details of breeding are often lacking. Obviously, the level of coverage varied considerably. Kites were certainly under-recorded during both world wars, when travel restrictions and other preoccupations prevailed. Cover is likely to have improved gradually through the 1920s and 1930s, with the spread of the motor car and better roads bringing more frequent incursions by naturalists and collectors from England or South Wales.

It would be pointless to tabulate the early data by individual years, so the records are presented here in five-year periods, listing the number of territories reported to hold pairs of kites during each period (see table 1). This may produce slightly inflated figures, but probably more realistic ones than any other method. Welsh kites are rather slow to mature and are potentially long-lived, so that most of the pairs that appear only occasionally in the archive would have existed unrecorded for at least a year or two, either side of the record. It seems unlikely that the number of territorial pairs in Wales ever fell much below ten, or the total spring population below 20 individuals, including immatures and unmated adults. The lowest level, allowing for under-recording in 1940-45, was probably during the 1930s.

Very low breeding success, caused mainly by egg-collecting and environmental problems, and excessive mortality of full-grown birds, probably caused mainly by the prevalence of poison baits set for crows (Corvidae) and

Table 1. Population of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in Wales in five-year periods during 1891 to 1990

—= insufficient information							
Five-year periods	Territories with pairs	Successful pairs known	Known broods reared	Five-year periods	Territories with pairs	Successful pairs known	Known broods reared
1891-95	21	—	—	1941-45	10	6	13
1896-1900	20	—	—	1946-50	16	9	14
1901-05	17	5	6	1951-55	17	13	30
1906-10	15	6	9	1956-60	18	14	32
1911-15	15	8	12	1961-65	23	15	30
1916-20	13	9	15	1966-70	33	19	44
1921-25	15	9	14	1971-75	45	26	61
1926-30	13	5	12	1976-80	52	30	74
1931-35	11	2	7	1981-85	79	46	91
1936-40	10	4	7	1986-90	104	62	155

foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, though many kites were also shot, meant that very few Welsh kites had surviving progeny. Studies of Red Kite DNA, undertaken since 1987 by Celia May, Jon Wetton and David Parkin at Nottingham University, using blood samples collected by the writer, have shown that all Welsh females (and presumably males also) until very recent years were descended from a single female that survived the population bottleneck. Another female joined the population within the past 20 years, so there are now two matriline, though the original one still covered about 85% of the population in 1992. The new matriline closely resembles one found commonly in German kites, and the immigrant female was almost certainly of German stock (May, Wetton & Parkin in prep.; *The Times*, 13.2.93). With recently introduced Spanish kites now breeding successfully in England, further transfusions of new blood into the Welsh population may be anticipated. The data on breeding performance given in table 1 indicate that the genetic bottleneck in Wales most probably occurred during the early 1930s. In 1931-35, only seven broods of kites, totalling ten young, are known to have been reared in Wales. Only two breeding territories were involved. One of these pairs produced five broods with seven young, and looks to be the likeliest channel for the sole surviving matriline. It was a very close-run thing.

Red Kites in Wales began to reoccupy lost ground in the late 1930s and 1940s, and, despite setbacks caused by myxomatosis (removing a favoured prey), severe winters, toxic chemicals, the reemergence of egg-collecting, and above all the continued usage of poison baits, they have survived and increased since that time. Since about 1950 there has been a serious and largely successful effort, supported by the Nature Conservancy (later NCC, now CCW) and the RSPB, to locate every pair every year. Numbers rose painfully slowly and erratically until the mid 1980s, then the increase accelerated as new pairs occupied more productive lowland sites and became more successful at rearing young. In 1992, there were at least 97 pairs of Red Kites in Wales, of which at least 81 certainly bred, and 60 were successful, rearing 96 young.

Summary

New evidence, largely from unpublished diaries, suggests that the low point in the numbers of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in Wales was not, as generally stated, around 1905, but in the 1930s. Red Kite eggs were introduced from Spain and placed in the nests of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in the 1920s and 1930s, leading to a discrete population in East Radnor which lasted only into the 1940s. Recent DNA work has shown that the entire Welsh Red Kite population was derived from a single female which survived the 1930s 'bottleneck', though another female (almost certainly from German stock) has since joined the population, giving two matriline at present.

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Rarities Committee

news and announcements

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P. G. Lansdown and the Rarities Committee

Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page. In the absence of further nominations (*Brit. Birds* 85: 330-333), Andy Stoddart started his term of membership on 1st April 1993, replacing John Marchant, who retired as the longest-serving member on 31st March 1993. John served on the Committee for nearly eight years and his identification expertise with all species-groups, particularly waders, his experience in all matters relating to ringing, and his instructive and balanced comments on records, which have been features of his work, will be missed by the other members of the Committee.

The following points of interest arise from the Committee's annual meeting, held at Blunham, Bedfordshire, on 3rd April 1993.

Consideration of straightforward records

Even well-documented rare-bird records sometimes fail to appear in the relevant year's 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'.

Late submission is outside the Committee's power to remedy, other than by encouragement. The Committee will, however, be taking positive steps to improve its own performance in terms of speed of assessment. This will involve records which, in the opinion of the Hon. Secretary, concern a comparatively easy-to-identify species or subspecies, and which appear to be thoroughly documented and are free from controversy, especially those which are accompanied by clearly identifiable photographs and/or a statement of support from the appropriate county or regional recorder. Such records will be considered by a new 'fast-track' system. For these records only, the Rarities Committee will be divided into two five-man 'teams', and batches of these apparently straightforward records will be circulated to just one 'team'. Each member's assessment of each record will be as thorough as usual, but, given the nature of the records and the five-man circulations, adjudication time will be reduced by at least half. Records receiving five votes for acceptance will automatically be accepted. Any record which is not accepted unanimously will be recirculated to the Committee as a whole, and any record which is considered not to be eligible for the 'fast-track' system will be assessed by the whole Committee, as at present.

Photographs of unsubmitted rarities

Several observers have suggested that, if a rare-bird record has not been submitted to the Rarities Committee and a photograph of the bird in question has been published, the Committee should assess the record on the basis of the photograph. It is important to note, however, that the law of libel permits



89-91. British Birds Rarities Committee meeting, Blunham, April 1993. Left to right: Peter Lansdown (Chairman), Grahame Wallbridge, Alan Brown, Pete Ellis, John Marchant, Peter Clement, Chris Heard, Andy Stoddart, Dr Colin Bradshaw, Graham Catley and Rob Hume
(J. T. R. Sharrock)

redress for an unfavourable comment made on any item which has not actually been submitted for consideration. This applies to reviews on books and reports on products as well as to judgments on records. The Committee has decided, therefore, not to consider as records photographs of rarities in magazines or newspapers. Observers who submit rare-bird records are, of course, welcome to make reference to published photographs in their notes.

List of species considered, late submission of records and number of records requiring recirculation

Discussion took place at the meeting on each of these topics, and it continued afterwards in correspondence. Any resulting changes to current practices which are adopted by the Committee will be reported in due course.

Election of new member

The Committee's nominee for the next vacancy, which will arise on or before 1st April 1994 from resignation or the longest-serving member's automatic retirement, is Ken Shaw, who lives in Stonehaven, near Aberdeen, Grampian. Ken is the bird recorder for most of Grampian (Banff, Aberdeen and Kincardine) and is a member of the Scottish Birds Records Committee. Together with Pete Ellis and Dave Suddaby, and at the request of the Rarities Committee, Ken has written 'King Eiders in Britain and Ireland, 1958-90', in which the species' statistics have been rationalised (*Brit. Birds* in press).

As usual, we invite other nominations, which should be sent to me by 31st December 1993. If further nominations are received, a postal election will take place, in which county and regional recorders and bird observatories will be invited to vote.

P. G. Lansdown, 197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG



Guidelines for rarities committees

The international meeting of rarities committees held on Texel, Netherlands, during 12th-20th October 1991, agreed a set of guidelines for rarities committees. The British delegate at this meeting, representing the British Birds Rarities Committee, was Graham P. Catley. The official Guidelines, which have already been published in *Dutch Birding* (15: 31-32), are endorsed and are followed by the BBRC. (The only respect in which the BBRC does not comply with the Guidelines concerns the publication of all records of all known escapes of all Holarctic species; it is the BBRC's policy to encourage each individual local report editor to include information on such escapes in an appendix to the main systematic list in county and regional bird reports every year.)

Extracts from the Guidelines have been published (and sometimes misquoted or misinterpreted) elsewhere in the British birding Press. The following is the correct, official version:

Background and technical aspects of work of rarities committees. The following account was originally written by Peter H. Barthel and was discussed, modified and completed by the participants of the first meeting of European and American rarities committees (from Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA) on Texel, Noordholland, the Netherlands, in October 1991. The final version was written by PHB, Pieter Bison and Claudia Wilds, and was agreed on by all participants of the Texel meeting.

Rationale

An unusual bird sighting in a given area does not necessarily constitute a scientifically insignificant event. Such cases can be of interest in the context of migration, orientation behaviour and range extension, and as consequences of weather patterns. They have to be carefully documented to be useful in contributing to answer scientific questions.

There are numerous examples of rare-bird records which, according to the knowledge of that time, were considered insignificant deviations from the norm but which later proved to be the signs of a newly recognised phenomenon. Only long-term documentation at a high standard can reveal such patterns which may be of special interest in the light of rapid environmental changes.

The recent enormous rise in bird(watch)ing activity and improvement in field identification have not only led to a steep increase in rare-bird reports but also facilitate their documentation. The sighting of a rare bird is only the first step in establishing a record: evidence must be submitted to an independent committee. Such rarities committees, now well established in many countries worldwide, provide a valuable service to the field observers and the scientific community alike by scrutinising records, publishing them in annual reports and putting on (generally accessible) file all information pertaining to observations of rare birds.

In many older and still too many contemporary publications, such observations or claims have not been checked by a competent committee and lack any form of publicly available documentation. These cases are scientifically worthless and should no longer burden the ornithological literature.

Rarities committees are not made mainly to verify claims of twitchers or to produce long country lists. The occurrence of rarities is a biological phenomenon to be studied like any other part of ornithology. Thus, it has to be treated in the same way: from a scientific point of view. The listing of records is just the beginning but probably the part birders enjoy most. The neglected and most important part is to use this knowledge in further research. If one looks at rarities in this way, it becomes evident that a scientist can work only with proven or substantiated records, not with claims or unverified reports. One recklessly accepted report may distort a whole pattern of occurrence.

To reveal such patterns, especially in very rarely occurring species, the analysis of records from vast areas is essential. Therefore, close co-operation among European rarities committees is necessary. Every rarities committee (or, better, every scientist working in the field of ornithology) in Europe must be able to trust the decisions of any other rarities committee. This objective is best served by a standardised method for checking reports and reaching clear decisions. This method should be used in every European country (or even worldwide).

To state it more bluntly, ornithology is a science and not a playground for listers. Rarities committees are responsible for the decisions they publish.

Guidelines

A comparison of the work of several European rarities committees has been made. Most of them, mainly in northern and central Europe, work in the same and obviously successful way. Most of the following guidelines are derived from their methods.

1. A rarities committee should work independently. In particular, decisions on records should not be influenced by societies or sponsoring organisations.
2. A rarities committee should consist of at least five members, independently of the size of the country. It does not seem to be necessary or even useful to have more than ten members. Periodic rotation of all members is advisable. Members should be elected by the committee. Every member should have qualifications that contribute to the work of the committee, for example, extensive field experience, knowledge of the current literature, skills in ringing or in examining museum skins and knowledge of the current birding scene.
3. Decisions should be reached unanimously or nearly so. A record should not be accepted with more than one negative vote. There should be a provision to allow reconsideration of any record.
4. There are different ways to circulate reports but two seem preferable. Every member receives his/her own copy of the documentation and comes to an independent decision which he/she submits to the secretary. If the opinions diverge, a report will be sent out again (with the arguments for and against it) until it is accepted (or rejected with at least two votes) in the third circulation. The second way is that one member gives a first statement, then sends the whole thing to the next member who agrees or disagrees, writes his/her opinion under the first statement—and so on. If, in the end, there are conflicting opinions, the file will circulate again. Difficult cases can be discussed in meetings of the full committee.
5. Whenever possible, the first (or preferably the first five) records should be proved by photographs, video films or tape recordings. In some cases, descriptions by highly qualified observers might suffice.
6. Reports of rarities committees should be published every year. All the relevant information on a record should be given when available (species/subspecies, date, place, province, number of individuals, age, sex, names of responsible observers, and the kinds of documentation: photographs, video films or tape recordings). It should also be stated when a bird has been caught or found dead. In the latter case, the locality of the specimen and the collection number must be given. A list of species that are considered by the committee should be published periodically and be available upon request. A summary in English, French or German should be included in reports in other languages. Every rarities committee should send its annual reports to every other committee in Europe.
7. The first (or preferably the first five) records should always be published in detail in a national (not regional) journal, including the full description and photographs (even if of poor quality), with a summary in English, French or German. The full documentation of every record should be kept on permanent file and made publicly accessible.
8. Every rarities committee should check the old exceptional records. In particular, reports of difficult species for which new identification criteria have been established should be reconsidered.
9. Records of probable, certain or likely escapes of Holarctic species (or others with a remote vagrancy potential) should be treated like genuine vagrants. Details of their occurrence should be given in an appendix to the annual report of the committee. Otherwise, possibly useful information (e.g. to reconsider them later or to establish a pattern of occurrence revealing genuine vagrancy) might get lost.
10. Every rarities committee should take care that reports that are not accepted by the committee are not referred to in the literature.
11. If a committee has difficulties in judging a report with respect to identity or origin, it should ask specialists for help instead of reaching an unsatisfactory decision.
12. The participants agreed that efforts should be undertaken to establish a European list committee as well as a European rarities committee. Details should be discussed during the next meeting. They also agreed that European meetings should be held about every second year.

PETER H. BARTHEL, PIETER BISON & CLAUDIA WILDS

Separating juvenile Little and Baillon's Crakes in the field



Colin Bradshaw

At the Identification Meeting of the British Birds Rarities Committee in August 1992, the question of separating Little Crake *Porzana parva* from Baillon's Crake *P. pusilla* in juvenile plumage was addressed. The need for research had been highlighted by some initial confusion when the juvenile Baillon's Crake was found on Fair Isle, Shetland, in September 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 522-523). Skins of both species were examined to identify diagnostic features. This report deals primarily with the identification features of juvenile plumage discussed at the meeting, but goes on to look at identification features in adult plumage.

Status

Both species are rare visitors to Britain and Ireland. Baillon's Crake has been recorded on only eight occasions during the 34 years 1958-91, although there have been three records in the last three of those years. All records have been in February, May or June, with the exception of the previously mentioned September record. Little Crake has been recorded on 31 occasions during 1958-91, though not in the last four of those years. These have been spread through both early-spring and autumn migration periods, with a peak in early November; there are also two January records.

Moult

The two species have a similar moult pattern. The post-juvenile moult, which can occur either before migration or in the winter quarters, consists of a complete moult of body and tail feathers, but no remiges (although there are a few records of juvenile Little Crakes moulting some primaries). The first-winter plumage is similar to the adult, but with worn remiges. All adults undergo a complete post-breeding moult, when all flight feathers are moulted synchronously and the birds become flightless. This usually

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occurs on the breeding grounds, but can occasionally be delayed until after migration. There is a partial pre-breeding moult. In early autumn, most individuals will be in either juvenile or adult plumage.

Features for separating juveniles

Structure

Little and Baillon's Crakes of any age can be separated by structural differences (but see provisos in the discussion on the separation of adults on structure). These were previously reported by D. I. M. Wallace (*Brit. Birds* 69: 443-447) and have been borne out by studies of skins, photographs and birds in the field. The key feature is the wing length and, specifically, the primary projection (see fig. 1). On Little Crane, this is long, almost as long as the exposed tertials, with never fewer than five primary tips exposed. Baillon's Crane has a very short primary projection, less than half the length of the exposed tertials (occasionally being almost hidden by the tertials) and rarely with more than three primary tips showing. Care should be taken, however, when the wings are 'drooped', allowing a view of all the primaries. The tail of Little Crane is also much longer than that of Baillon's Crane, but the long wings reach almost to the tail tip, whereas, on Baillon's, the tail projects well beyond the short wingtips (K. E. Vinicombe *in litt.*). Whether or not this feature is obvious depends, however, on whether the tail is cocked, and the Committee felt that this would be only a minor fieldmark.



Fig. 1. Differences in primary projection and tertial markings between juvenile Little Crane *Porzana parva* (left) and Baillon's Crane *P. pusilla* (Colin Bradshaw)

Plumage

TERTIALS

A useful plumage feature for the separation of the two species also revolves around the 'back end'. Both species have dark-centred tertials. Little Crane has very pale, buff, fringes to the inner webs of all the tertials, forming a broad creamy line along the inner aspect of the folded wing from the upper end of the rump to beyond the base of the tail. This can be contiguous with more diffuse cream-coloured stripes down each side of the mantle. In flight, this gives Little a buff-striped appearance reminiscent of Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*. It is important to note, however, that a pale tertial streak is also shown by Spotted Crane *P. porzana* and thus cannot be used as a sole feature for identifying Little Crane. On Baillon's Crane, there is no corresponding

line, the inner webs of the tertials being either dark rufous or edged with a thin J-shaped white line, which never forms a broad continuous line.

WING-COVERTS

The degree and shape of spotting on the wing-coverts is often quoted as the most reliable feature for separating the two species. Baillon's Crake is reputed to have white ring-shaped spots spread at random over the coverts, whilst Little Crake is said to have a few regular-shaped white spots arranged in rows. We did not find this a constant feature and cannot recommend it as a sole means of separation.

The wing-coverts, with the exception of the inner greater coverts, are rarely visible on small crakes in the field. These feather tracts are covered by large drooping scapulars and overlapping flank feathers so that any features on these feathers would rarely be seen. It may be that, previously, there has been some confusion over covert and scapular markings, which do appear to differ between the species (see later).

If there are ring-shaped spots, then the bird is a Baillon's Crake, but any individual with ordinary spots can be either (see *Brit. Birds* 79: 677, plate 354, for a good example of such a Baillon's). A feature that did seem to be constant was that Baillon's Crake always had a small area of black surrounding the white spots, whereas, on Little Crake, the area just proximal to the white spot was brown and concolorous with the rest of the covert. Because of the contrast with the blacker base colour, the spots tend to be more obvious on Baillon's Crake.

Other features

Three other features were thought to be relatively useful:

- (1) Baillon's Crake is noticeably smaller than Little Crake, though how helpful this would be in the case of an isolated bird is debatable, as both species are 'small'.
- (2) The scapulars of Baillon's Crake tend to be blackish with white flecks, whilst those of Little Crake are brown with white flecks.

92. Adult female Little Crake *Porzana parva*, East Sussex, March 1985 (Peter Gasson)



(3) The underparts of Baillon's Crake are quite heavily barred, the foreflanks as conspicuously so as the rear flanks, whilst on Little Crake they tend to be relatively free of barring except on the rear flanks.

We were unimpressed by difference in mantle colours as a distinguishing feature between the two species in juvenile plumage, as there seemed to be considerable overlap. Baillon's is supposed to be chestnut above, whilst Little Crake is said to be muddy-brown. Unfortunately, the colour of the legs, which is also supposed to be a constant differentiating feature at any age, could not be assessed using study skins. Examination of photographs, however, suggests that juvenile Baillon's can have grey-green legs, not especially different from those of juvenile Little, and not always the pale pink legs illustrated by, for example, Jonsson (1992, *Birds of Europe*).

Separation in adult plumage

The separation of the two species in adult plumage is already well documented in numerous books and articles and should not cause quite so many problems. Caution should, however, still be exercised.

Structure

Primary projection and relative size are a constant means of identification no matter what the age or sex, but some caution should be used when assessing primary projection. The Baillon's Crake at Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, in May 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 82: plates 303 & 304) had a missing tertial on one wing, making the primary projection seem abnormally long. Similarly, Little Crakes coming out of moult can show a short primary projection. This is because of the moult pattern previously described. After the post-breeding moult, Little Crakes regrow all the remiges at the same time, giving a uniformly shortened wing. Such a bird is, perhaps, unlikely in Britain, but this should be borne in mind when identifying the species on its breeding grounds and, rarely, in its winter quarters.

Fig. 2. Little *Porzana parva* and Baillon's Crakes *P. pusilla* (Ren Hathaway)

Top right FIRST-YEAR MALE LITTLE CRAKE Note restricted area of black-and-white bars on rear flanks and undertail, length of the bill, and primary projection. The extensive white spots on the scapulars, mantle and what little can be seen of the coverts (on crakes, these feather tracts are frequently covered by the scapulars and flank feathers) are typical of first-years, which show more extensive spotting above than do adults. Note also how difficult it is to see red at the base of the bill.

Top left ADULT BAILLON'S CRAKE A poorly marked individual, with the foreflank feathers pulled out and overlapping the rear flanks and thus partially obscuring the black-and-white barring. Note the stubbier bill, short primary projection, more extensive white spotting on mantle and scapulars, and richer upperparts, with more contrast with underparts than on Little Crake.

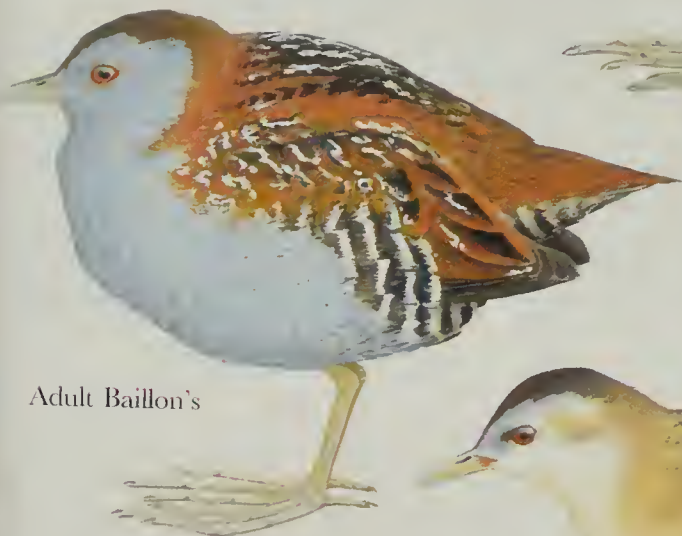
Centre right ADULT FEMALE LITTLE CRAKE Note relatively plain upperparts and buff underparts. The pale line along the inner web of the tertials is still prominent.

Bottom left JUVENILE LITTLE CRAKE An individual with well-marked underparts. Note more extensive barring on underparts than on adult female. Separated from Baillon's on primary projection, obvious line on inner web of tertials and extent of barring on underparts. Spotting on coverts and bare-part coloration are of dubious reliability.

Bottom right JUVENILE BAILLON'S CRAKE A well-marked bird. Note short primary projection and relatively plain tertials. 'Ringmarks' visible on scapulars, but coverts hidden. Barring on flanks much more extensive than on Little, but bare parts similar.



First-year male Little



Adult Baillon's



Adult female Little



Juvenile Little



Juvenile Baillon's

Plumage and bare parts

In adult plumage, Baillon's Crakes show little if any sexual difference, but this is not the case with Little Crakes: males being grey below, females buff. Consequently, adult male Little Crane superficially resembles Baillon's Crane, but the adult female looks more like the juvenile of both species. Bare-part coloration is usually highlighted as the means of separation of adults, but this demands both good light and prolonged views—a scenario not often associated with vagrant crakes in Britain—and there is some doubt as to the validity of leg-colour differences (*Limicola* 4: 93-141).

Adult Little Crakes of both sexes have a red base to a lime-green bill and olive or green legs. The red bill base is absent on Baillon's Crane, which has a uniform yellow-green bill and greyish-pink, pinky-green, dirty-olive or occasionally dull-green legs. On the underparts of adult male Little Crane, there is a restricted area of dark grey and white bars on the rear flanks and undertail-coverts. This rarely extends in front of the legs and sometimes is so restricted as to be virtually impossible to see in the field. The remainder of the underparts may look a paler grey than those of Baillon's Crane. Baillon's has the underparts a similar shade of grey to those of Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, with extensive black-and-white barring on the rear flanks extending well forward of the legs and always being quite obvious, probably owing not only to the more extensive distribution, but also to the increased contrast between the black and the white bars compared with the duller (dark grey and white) bars of Little Crane. In addition, the muddy-brown upperparts of male Little Crane, with limited areas of white spotting, are paler and much less contrasting than the chestnut-brown and well-spotted upperparts of Baillon's Crane. On Baillon's,

93. Adult female Little Crane *Porzana parva*, East Sussex, March 1985 (David M. Coltridge)





94. Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, Israel, April 1976 (R. F. Porter)

the chestnut-brown on the sides of the neck shows stronger contrast with the grey underparts. Altogether, the effect is to make adult male Little Crake seem relatively pale and plain, whilst Baillon's is dark and well marked. These differences can be seen by comparing plates 96 and 94, and fig. 2.

First-winter plumage of male Little Crake is similar to that of adult male except that both the dark feather centres and the pale spots are more numerous

95. Juvenile Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, Cyprus, July 1982 (previously published in colour, *Brit. Birds* 79: plate 354)(T. Box)





96. Adult male Little Crane *Porzana parva* (note short wings), Kuwait, November 1991 (A. V. Cross)

and extensive. In addition, the red at the base of the bill can be restricted and paler than on the adult, so there is potential for confusion with Baillon's Crane as both the upperparts and the bill are more similar than on the adults. There is, however, still a paucity of barring on the underparts, and the remiges are retained, worn juvenile feathers.

97. Juvenile Baillon's Crane *Porzana pusilla*, Kenya, April 1983 (P. B. Taylor)



The adult female plumage of Little Crake is very similar to the juvenile plumage of both species. The black centres to most upperpart feathers are, however, less noticeable and there are fewer white spots on the upperparts than on the juvenile plumage of either species. The net effect is to make the upperparts seem plain and pale, as on the male. The main features that can be used to separate adult female Little Crake from juvenile Baillon's Crake are the same as those used to separate the juveniles. The pale line on the tertials of Little Crake, however, may not be present in spring or early summer when the plumage is worn, but, at that time of year, any Baillon's Crake seen in Britain would be in adult plumage. In addition, there is usually very little, if any, flank barring, which is another useful separating feature from juvenile Baillon's Crake (although juvenile Little Crake can be both as poorly barred as adult female Little Crake and rarely almost as strongly as some juvenile Baillon's Crakes). Female Littles can sometimes show a grey supercilium and submoustachial area. Finally, bare-part coloration, as previously described, can be used if the views are good enough.

Acknowledgments

The Rarities Committee wishes to thank The Natural History Museum at Tring, Martin Cade, Peter Colston, Tony Cross, Paul Oldfield, Mike Reed and, especially, Keith Vinicombe for their help on this subject.

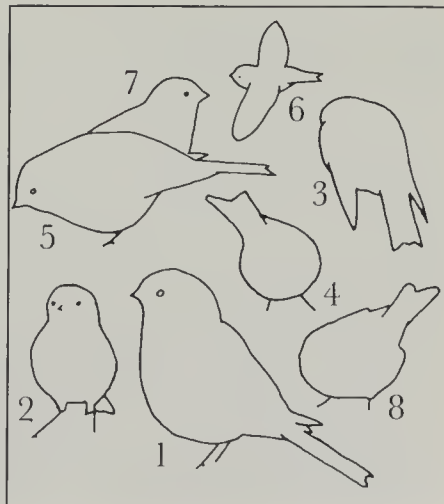
Summary

The two best features for separating juvenile Little *Porzana parva* and Baillon's Crakes *P. pusilla* are the length of the primary projection (Long on Little, B***** short on Baillon's) and the presence of a broad pale stripe along the inside of the tertials (present on Little, absent on Baillon's).

It is worth remembering that, from December to May, any small crake that has buff underparts is a female Little Crake, as male Little and all Baillon's Crakes are grey below between these dates (BWP vol. 2).

Dr Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ

Arctic Redpolls in Kent We apologise to John Cantelo and to our readers for the accidental omission from the painting of Arctic *Carduelis hornemanni* and Common Redpolls *C. flammea flammea* in the March 1993 issue (fig. 1 on page 138) of the vital reference numbers, now shown here. EDS





Mystery photographs

190 Single, small waders seen away from their usual habitat can pose identification problems that would not occur in more usual situations. When that wader is determined to roost, bill tucked into its scapulars (plate 75), the problems are compounded and identification is even less easy. Now (plate 98, below) it is shown rather more alert.

To consider our mystery bird: it is very pale, almost albinistic, with proportions that show it to be a small wader, a small 'Calidrid' since it lacks the collared appearance of the small ringed plovers *Charadrius*. The upperparts show a mixture of freshly acquired, rounded, dark-centred feathers and a few uniform, pale grey, rather pointed, worn feathers. This mixture is typical of waders in spring, moulting from winter to summer plumage. Its legs are dark, so the choice is between the dark-legged stints (Semipalmated *Calidris pusilla* and Western Sandpipers *C. mauri*, Little *C. minuta* and Red-necked Stints *C. ruficollis*, ignoring the very occasional dark-legged Temminck's Stint *C. tenuicollis*), and the other three small Calidrids: Sanderling *C. alba*, and White-rumped *C. fuscicollis* and Baird's Sandpipers *C. bairdii*.





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The last two species have rather long wings compared with the other species, extending beyond the tail and giving them both a more elongated appearance than the others including the mystery bird. White-rumped and Baird's can thus be eliminated.

At this stage of moult, Semipalmated Sandpiper acquires very dark mantle and scapular feathers, with relatively narrow buffish fringes, and Western Sandpiper rapidly acquires rufous upperparts and develops a scattering of small dark chevrons on the breast and flanks, giving the underparts a spotted appearance when seen from a distance. Both Little and Red-necked Stints develop rufous upperpart fringes in fresh adult plumage. Our bird is thus unusual in having extensive pale grey upperpart fringes in fresh summer plumage, with only the slightest hint of rufous; it can only be a Sanderling. This is confirmed by the dark area at the bend of the wing (though this is partly covered by the breast feathers), and by the pale, almost featureless facial pattern. All the stints—even Temminck's, which has a rather plain face—have a more prominent supercilium and eye-stripe.

In full summer plumage, Sanderlings are strongly rufous, but this develops only when the pale upperpart fringes have worn away. In this plumage, there are similarities with adult summer Red-necked Stint (see *Brit. Birds* 79: 609-621; plate 316). There is, however, one clinching feature, well seen in the second photograph (plate 98), that immediately identifies our mystery bird as a Sanderling: the lack of a hind toe, a feature unique among the Calidrids.

I photographed this individual in Gwynedd in mid April 1988. When first found, it was seen rather distantly at a small, muddy beach pool, feeding with two Dunlins *C. alpina*, when the immediate impression it gave was of an extremely pale, perhaps albinistic wader. With closer views, its identity became apparent; it later roosted, and allowed me to take the photographs shown here now and last month.

R. J. CHANDLER



Twenty-five years ago...

'Attempted reintroduction of the White-tailed Eagle.—The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is currently attempting to reintroduce this magnificent raptor to one of its former Scottish haunts. Four young White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* taken, with the sanction of the Norwegian government, from eyries in northern Norway (where this species is unprotected and much persecuted) were brought during June and July to Fair Isle, Shetland.'

'Proposed new bird observatory building for Fair Isle.—Ever since this famous bird observatory was established in 1948, its accommodation has consisted of timber huts built during the 1939-45 war by the Royal Navy. These huts are now much dilapidated, and uneconomic to maintain; the Fair Isle Observatory Trust has therefore had to plan for a new observatory building . . . estimated cost of this new building is £36,000.' (*Brit. Birds* 61: 325, July 1968)

At the end of the month (on the nights of 27th/28th July and 1st/2nd August), 75 Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia* were killed by flying against the lighthouse on Bardsey Island. Worse was to follow shortly . . .





Notes

Eurasian Curlews thermalling On 27th April 1991, at Newquay, Cornwall, I watched two small groups of Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* fly in from the west and land on the lawns beside the Headland Hotel. There was broken stratocumulus cloud based at about 800 m, with a light easterly wind and a surface temperature of about 15°C. The 34 curlews then took off together and flew into the wind until they met a thermal over Newquay harbour, when they began soaring upwards in a tight right-handed spiral. They flew on extended wings with only occasional 'positioning' flaps, looking remarkably like ibises (Threskiornithidae). The whole flock remained in the thermal, which drifted westwards across Fistral Bay and out to sea, by which time the curlews had been joined by a few immature gulls (Laridae) and were almost at the base of the broken cloud.

JOHN STEWART-SMITH

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Mistle Thrush alarm-call terrorising cat The well-known rattling alarm-call of the Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* (described in detail in *BWP* vol. 5, pages 1020-1021) is not only a sign of agitation or anxiety, but also serves to attract the attention of a potential predator, and thereby distracts it from the thrush's nest or young. Observations in my rural garden at Blunham, Bedfordshire, in the summer of 1991 and subsequently have shown that the very loudness and harshness of the call, linked with the Mistle Thrush's fearless, aggressive behaviour, may have a more positively deterrent effect.

A pair of Mistle Thrushes reared young from a nest in a hawthorn *Crataegus* in summer 1991. When incubating, the thrushes apparently ignored our resident domestic Siamese cat, as do all the other local birds (they are merely circumspect in their behaviour). As soon as the young hatched, however, the Mistle Thrushes' behaviour totally altered. When the cat approached to within 40 m of the nest, both thrushes 'rattled' loudly and one dive-bombed the cat from behind, after the fashion of a breeding skua *Stercorarius*. Although there was no physical contact, the cat was instantly intimidated. He (a neutered male) ignores all other bird songs and calls, including the vaguely similar chuckling flight calls of Fieldfare *T. pilaris*, but, up to seven months later, the rattle of a Mistle Thrush—even if uttered by a distant individual, 200 m or so away—immediately triggered a cautious, defensive stance or, if the Mistle Thrush was closer, a panic-stricken dash towards protective cover. In at least this one case, the Mistle Thrush's rattle call provided a very effective anti-predator protection.

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Eurasian Jay apparently attempting to extract House Martins from nest During the evening of 20th June 1991, at Ockham Mill, Surrey, J. Allen and I noticed a Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* perched on a low wall, eating a bird. Although we could not positively identify the prey, it appeared to be a House Martin *Delichon urbica*, a colony of which was nesting on a nearby house. The jay then flew up to the colony, perching vertically on the wall, and began looking into the nests under the eaves; it did this at two different places, before apparently losing interest and flying away. Meanwhile, the House Martins were wheeling around, frantically calling overhead, but they did not attempt to mob the jay. On revisiting the site on the evening of 26th June, we again saw a jay disturbing the colony: it sat on a chimney pot and was this time mobbed by the martins; it did not attempt to fly up to the nests, and after a few minutes flew into nearby trees.

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Magpies and milk bottles It is well known that tits *Parus* peck through milk-bottle caps for cream. By the summer of 1991, on my housing estate near Chepstow, Gwent, Magpies *Pica pica* had learnt this habit. A neighbour first noticed it in June, when one Magpie was seen pecking at four bottles in succession on one doorstep; this behaviour was noted regularly throughout July and August, but less regularly thereafter, following heavy rainfall in mid September after a prolonged dry period. The Magpies usually pecked one hole through the top of the cap, but sometimes made one large and one small hole (presumably with upper and lower mandibles); occasionally, the whole top was ripped off. While Magpies may have learnt this habit from the tits, it is more likely that, with the increase of this species in suburban gardens in recent years, they themselves learned to exploit a new and readily available food source. Black bin-liners, used for refuse and left out for collection, are also pecked through for food. As much of July-August 1991 was exceptionally dry, they may have resorted to these food sources when more natural food (for example, on grassland) was difficult to come by.

Pecking of milk bottles by Magpies had been recorded previously (T. R. Birkhead *in litt.*), but it has now been reported from many parts of Britain (*BTO News* 177: 10). In the case of tits, the habit started in two or a few centres and then spread throughout the country (Fisher & Hinde, 1949, *Brit. Birds* 42: 347-357). There is some concern that Magpies and other birds may spread *Campylobacter*, a *Salmonella*-type organism, to human beings as a result of opening milk bottles (Hudson *et al.*, *The Lancet* May 1990: 1160), and there appears to be a clear relationship between consumption of milk from bottles pecked by Magpies (and other crows, Corvidae) and the incidence of human enteritis (*BTO News* 177: 10).

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Letters

New Herring Gull taxonomy The recent editorial decision (*Brit. Birds* 86: 1-2) to adopt splitting Herring Gull into three species *L. argentatus*, *L. cachinnans* and *L. armenicus*, although in line with current trends in avian taxonomy, seems highly controversial. As discussed below, this treatment: (1) may be untenable for populations other than the west European, and (2) artificially promotes interest in differences rather than similarities between the populations.

While *argenteus* and *nichahellis* behave as good species on the western coast of France (Yésou 1991), a far less clear situation is found in eastern Europe, where relationships between members of these two groups remain largely obscure. Traditionally, the yellow-legged morph breeding around the Baltic and in Scandinavia ('*omissus*') is subject to endless controversies. Some researchers (Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1982; Cramp & Simmons 1983; Devillers 1983) linked these gulls to *cachinnans* rather than to *argentatus*, mostly on account of leg colour. Yet, except for this feature, no consistent differences have been found in morphology, biometrics and vocalisations between yellow-legged and pink-legged Herring Gulls breeding sympatrically in this region (Stegmann 1934; Vaurie 1965; Barth 1968; Mierauskas *et al.* 1991). Also, there is no evidence for reproductive isolation between the two morphs in the Baltic/Scandinavia area. On the contrary, widespread interbreeding has been suggested (e.g. Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1982), though there are no data about mating preferences in relation to leg colour. Individuals with intermediate leg colour occur, however, not infrequently. In sum, these data suggest that '*omissus*' is a mere variant of morphological variation within *L. a. argentatus* (Stegmann 1934, 1960; Vaurie 1965; Barth 1968; Grant 1986). Whether the yellow leg colour in the Baltic area originated independently of that in southern populations is unknown. Alternatively, this feature may reflect introgression of *cachinnans*-genes following possible dispersal of gulls from the Black/Caspian Sea region into the Baltic (Voipio 1954; Barth 1968; but see Stegmann 1960; Mierauskas & Greimas 1992). In that second, as yet unfalsified scenario, relationships between *L. cachinnans* and *L. argentatus* are strikingly different from those found in western France.

Recent northward expansion of *cachinnans* and *nichahellis* colonising inland areas of central Europe is particularly interesting in this context. As *argentatus* simultaneously expands inland from the coast of the southern Baltic, another area of secondary contact between the two racial groups is expected to develop somewhere in the lowlands of central and eastern Europe. This has been claimed to happen very recently in Poland (Dubois *et al.* 1990; Dubois & Stawarczyk 1991), where both pink-legged and yellow-legged gulls were found to breed in some newly established colonies (Sikora *et al.* submitted). Although these yellow-legged individuals may represent the first, new colonists from the

south, their Baltic origin is much more likely (Chylarecki & Sikora 1991; Eigenhuis 1991; Mierauskas & Greimas 1992). Anyhow, preliminary results of an ongoing study (P. Chylarecki, M. Zielinski & A. Sikora) suggest that, while leg colour varies there from grey through pink to yellow, gulls showing more yellow legs tend to show also more extensive black bands on their primaries. This offers some support for the option that '*omissus*' has had *cachinnans*-birds among its ancestors, though alternative explanations are still possible. Anyway, these data show clearly that continuous variation exists between the 'classical' pink-legged *argentatus* individuals with reduced black on their wing-tips and the yellow-legged *cachinnans*-type birds showing more extensive black on their primaries. Also, pairs involving clearly yellow-legged and pink-legged/grey-legged birds, observed inland in Poland (*contra* Dubois & Stawarczyk 1991), suggest that mating preferences are at least relaxed there.

Thus, it is quite possible that, in east Europe, the relationship between *cachinnans*-gulls and *argentatus*-gulls differs markedly from that found on the Atlantic coast of France. The proposed taxonomic arrangement also does not cope with the situation found in Asia, where gulls from the *cachinnans*-group seemingly intergrade with races linked to *L. fuscus* (Chylarecki & Sikora submitted). From the Asiatic perspective, *armenicus* looks like a smaller, slimmer variant of the central Asiatic races *barabensis* and *tainyrensis* rather than a separate species (Stegmann 1934; Bourne 1991; Chylarecki & Sikora submitted).

Assigning specific status to racial groups of Herring Gull would undoubtedly enhance the interest of birdwatchers in the identification criteria of these forms. In contrast to the editors of *British Birds*, however, I am afraid that I consider that this would not necessarily lead to a more thorough knowledge of their morphology, and eventually a better understanding of phylogenetical relationships. Most observers will simply focus on finding and exaggerating subtle and illusive differences found between the proposed species (or better: average individuals), while the extensive within-'species' variation—often exceeding that found between 'species'—will receive far less attention. Consequently, the whole picture would be biased towards seeking anything that could possibly separate the two taxa. In a self-reinforcing process, papers listing alleged identification characters will be more welcomed than those reporting lack of effective criteria. Also 'sharp-eyed' observers who could tell the species of intermediate (and actually not identifiable) individuals would be lauded by birders.

The identification criteria of *L. cachinnans* given by authors already adopting its specific status seem just the case in point. A number of features claimed to enable 'rapid' ('easy', 'straightforward') separation of *L. cachinnans* from *L. argentatus* (*sensu stricto*) occur, in fact, in both the racial groups. The most striking example is the number of black-marked primaries, with six or seven feathers claimed to identify *cachinnans* and five being characteristic for race *argentatus*. This misunderstanding seems rooted in Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer (1982: 517), who showed an extreme variant with five black-tipped primaries as 'common' among *argentatus*, despite 87% of birds in their reference population (Goethe 1961) showing a more extensive pattern. Actually, six primaries marked black is the most frequent (usually over 60% of

birds) phenotype in *all* European populations of the Herring Gull complex (except for the Norwegian one). Moreover, seven black-marked primaries also occur not infrequently among gulls of the *argentatus*-group (up to 14%: Barth 1968; Kuschert 1979; Coulson *et al.* 1982; Kilpi & Hario 1986; Mierauskas *et al.* 1991; own observations). Similarly, gulls of the Baltic/Scandinavian region may show a red or deep orange orbital ring, regardless of their leg colour. Also, only a fraction of *argentatus* gulls show very large white mirrors and 'thayeri'-pattern on outer primaries, while the vast majority show a wing-tip pattern inseparable from *cachinnans/michahellis* as well as *argenteus*. Actually, except for the rare individuals with four or five black-marked primaries and/or 'thayeri'-pattern, no good criteria exist to distinguish *cachinnans* from yellow-legged *argentatus* (Mierauskas & Greimas 1992).

A recent article by Golley (1993) is just another nice example of such an approach. British *argenteus* is contrasted with an extreme pale variant of Scandinavian *argentatus*, representing perhaps 25% of variation found within this race. Not surprisingly, identification of the two races is found to be 'quite straightforward', though splitting of *argentatus* and *argenteus* (sic!) has not been suggested—'as yet'.

Last but not least, the Herring Gull case exemplifies a more general splitting trend observed nowadays in avian taxonomy. Clearly, this reflects the preference for the concept of 'phylogenetical species', as opposed to that of 'biological species' (Cracraft 1983; McKittrick & Zink 1988). Phylogenetical species are defined as 'smallest diagnosable clusters of individual organisms within which there is parental pattern of ancestry and descent'; reproductive isolation between the two is not required, in contrast to the biological species concept. Certainly, this is not the place to discuss all flaws of phylogenetical species (cf. Avise & Ball 1990), among which the most serious is that no clear limits to this splitting exist. Yet the whole absurdity of this approach is perhaps most clear when applied to our own species, *Homo sapiens*. No doubt, Norwegians and Italians are phenotypically recognisable ('on average'), they differ strongly in vocalisations (language), have quite different history, and interbreeding is rare compared with inbreeding. So, should not we treat them as distinct (phylogenetical) species?

To summarise, I feel that we should be rather cautious about introducing a new taxonomy of the Herring Gull. Fashion goes here much ahead of quantitative analyses of morphology, behaviour and genetics of the taxa in question. Several aspects of gull biology and evolutionary history need to be clarified prior to proposed changes. These include testing whether: (1) yellow legs of some Baltic/Scandinavian birds reflect past introgression of *cachinnans*-genes; (2) the leg colour is determined genetically or can be influenced environmentally (diet); (3) northern and southern populations will hybridise in a possible new zone of secondary contact in eastern Europe; (4) races allied to *cachinnans* and *fuscus* intergrade in Asia; (5) *armenicus* intergrades with populations of central Asia. Also a thorough biometrical analysis of morphological variation of gulls from the Atlantic coast of France—lacking as yet—would contribute to this knowledge.

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We are very pleased to publish this contribution to the debate on the Herring Gull 'complex'. Mr Chylarecki's point that 'splitting' can lead to emphasis on differences between forms, with similarities conveniently being ignored, is a timely word of caution. We shall, for the present, however, be continuing to refer to *L. argentatus*, *L. cachinnans* and *L. armenicus* as separate species; this has at least created much added interest in the yellow-legged gulls which occur in England and are no longer dismissed by some observers as 'only a race of Herring Gull' and hardly worth a second glance. A paper on the field identification of these birds is in preparation, by David Christie, Alan Harris, Rob Hume and Hadoram Shirihai, for publication in *British Birds*. EDS



99-101. Views of Rockall from southwest (above left), west (above right) and northeast (left), June 1992 (*Svenja Belaoussoff*)



102. Below, nesting Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* (arrowed) and position of nesting site of Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* (circled) on Rockall, 19th June 1992 (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 16) (*Svenja Belaoussoff*)



Northern Gannet and Common Guillemot nesting on Rockall My photographs of Rockall, taken during my visit on 19th June 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 16), which I thought had been lost in the mail, have now reached me. They show general aspects of Rockall (plates 99-101), and a distant view of the Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* on its nest and the position of the nesting Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* (plate 102).

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Do British tits drink milk or just skim the cream? Opening of milk bottles by Great *Parus major*, Blue *P. caeruleus* and Coal Tits *P. ater* is a well-known and apparently widespread phenomenon throughout the British Isles (Hinde & Fisher 1951). After removing a bottle cap, tits drink from the bottle and/or carry the cap away and ingest the semi-solid cream residues on it (Fisher & Hinde 1949). It is commonly accepted that tits open bottles to take milk (Fisher & Hinde 1949; Welty 1982), yet what is not considered is why they ingest only the cream.

Lactose is present in cow milk in relatively high concentrations (5-7%) and amounts (about 40% of milk's solids: Jenness & Patton 1976). Lactose is a disaccharide, and, to be absorbed in the intestine, has first to be hydrolysed into its monosaccharide components (glucose and galactose) by the intestinal enzyme lactase (Vonk & Western 1984). Animals lacking lactase cannot digest and absorb lactose, and consequently the presence of undigested lactose in their intestines can cause severe osmotic diarrhoea (Sunshine & Kretchmer 1964). Several authors have reported lack of intestinal lactase activity in birds, including the domestic fowl *Gallus gallus* (Plimmer 1902), Blue-breasted Quail *Coturnix chinensis* and Common Crane *Grus grus* (Zoppi & Shmerling 1969), and Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (Martínez del Río & Stevens 1989), while Kerry (1969) was unable to detect significant lactase activity in five species of seabird. I recently conducted a survey of intestinal disaccharidases in 17 bird species of six families, including three hummingbirds (Trochilidae), three tyrant-flycatchers (Tyrannidae), two thrushes (Turdidae), one wood-warbler (Parulidae), one saltator and one bunting (both Emberizidae) and six icterids (Icteridae), and could not detect lactase activity in any (see Martínez del Río 1990). As expected from the observation that birds appear to lack intestinal lactase, 'crop milk' of pigeons contains mainly proteins and lipids and lacks lactose (Vandeputte-Poma 1968). Like other non-mammalian vertebrates (Martínez del Río & Stevens 1988), birds appear unable to digest lactose. Intestinal lactase seems to be a uniquely mammalian trait associated with the evolution of mammary glands (Kretchmer 1981; Vonk & Western 1984).

Because tits lack lactase, milk can cause them osmotic diarrhoea and feeding aversion (see Martínez del Río & Stevens 1989). I suggest that this is why they do not drink it. In contrast with whole milk, cream is a concentrated emulsion of fat globules that contains minute amounts of lactose; lipids comprise about 90% of the total solids in cream (Privett *et al.* 1968). Thus, cream is a digestible and energy-dense food for birds, and tits presumably open milk bottles to feed exclusively on it.

The observation that tits open milk bottles to feed on cream rather than milk leads to two verifiable predictions:

(1) Bottles containing milk of different grades are distinguished by caps of different colours. Fisher & Hinde (1949) mentioned that tits show marked preferences among bottles with different colours, but presented no data suggesting consistent preferences for one colour over another. I predict that tits will open bottles with silver and gold caps (containing non-homogenised and Channel Islands non-homogenised milk) preferentially over those with red caps (containing homogenised milk).

(2) Consumer preference patterns are likely to influence bottle-opening by tits. The consumption of homogenised and skim milk appears to be increasing, and replacing the consumption of non-homogenised milk, in the United Kingdom (Davies & Holdworth 1984; Hall 1986). Skim and homogenised milks do not form a cream layer, and their lactose can cause adverse digestive effects if consumed by birds. I predict that the incidence of bottle-opening by birds will decrease concurrently with the consumption of non-homogenised milk in the British Isles.

This letter was inspired by one from Dr E. Kochva. I thank Paul Andreadis, Ron Edwards, Doug Levey, Olav Oftedal and Martha Wilson for commenting on the manuscript, and Michelle Wheatley for anglicising its spelling. Alberto Búrquez convinced me that milk, nectar and tits had somehow to be related: this contribution is dedicated to him.

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Seasonal reports

Autumn 1992



Barry Nightingale and Keith Allsopp

Some unchecked reports are included, as well as authenticated records

July's weather was cloudy and wet, and rather warm, particularly in the second half, and this continued into the first ten days of August. Generally, August was unsettled and windy, and very wet: in fact, the wettest over England and Wales since 1956 and over Scotland and Ireland since 1985.

Vigorous westerlies dominated the early autumn and continued until mid September, which again was a cloudy month throughout Britain and Ireland, with heavy falls of rain. October was marked by unusually frequent northerly winds, and for central England was the fifth-coldest October this century, and the coldest since 1974 for Britain and Ireland as a whole.

After the non-stop excitement of the previous four months (*Brit. Birds* 85: 636-647), autumn 1992 proved generally unremarkable. August was noted for Britain's second **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis*, third **Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia* and fourth **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppellii* (plate 104), a **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus*, a **Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* and a **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens*. September will largely be remembered for Britain's second **Hooded Warbler** *Wilsonia citrina*, a **Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* in Ireland, and a tremendous passage of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger*. There was an encouraging start to October, with a good passage of easterly vagrants, including an obliging **Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica*, and record numbers of **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*. A heavy surge of **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* occurred off the northeast coast of England and in the southwest there was a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* and a **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* (plate 103). North Ronaldsay (Orkney) again scored most house points from the rarity-seekers, but Scilly by comparison had one of its most ordinary autumns in the last 20 years.

Early autumn

The winds in July were predominantly westerly as a series of cyclones, whose centres tracked eastwards to the north of Scotland, dragged active weather fronts in off the Atlantic around a persistent Azores anticyclone. An exception was a low-pressure centre during the first week which crossed England bringing easterlies in its wake during 4th-7th July. The rare ducks which featured strongly on the July menu came from both east and west, and perhaps the rather changeable weather pattern explains why. **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* on Fetlar (Shetland) on 1st and at Murcar (Grampian) on 9th preceded a **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* at North Yell (Shetland) on 12th, another **Surf Scoter** in the Sound of Taransay (Orkney) on 24th and a **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors*, an unusual July record, at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 29th.

A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* at Cley (Norfolk) on 1st-2nd July more properly relates to spring passage, rather than the autumn, as did the **Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica* already covered in the spring 'Seasonal reports' (*Brit. Birds* 85: 646, plate 297). Away from their breeding areas, there were six **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus*, with three in Orkney, and singles at Martin Mere (Lancashire), at Minsmere (Suffolk) and at Staines Reservoir (Surrey). A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 2nd July, a **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* at Rye Harbour (East Sussex) on 4th and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* on the Douglas Estuary (Co. Cork) were an exciting trio, and there were five **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* during 11th-31st July.



The now-regular **Least Tern** *Sterna antillarum* showed well in Rye Harbour up to 12th July, and the **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis* stayed in the Farne Islands (Northumberland) until 21st July, leaving two days before its hybrid young, having again mated with a Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* - where do the offspring go? Wanderers of one of our other rare breeding seabirds, **Roseate Tern** *S. dougallii*, appeared around our coasts, off Humberside on 3rd, at Breydon Water (Norfolk) during 2nd-6th, and, very unusually, inland in Nottinghamshire during 3rd-9th; then, in the second half of July, there were two at Exmouth (Devon), up to six at Dawlish Warren (Devon), up to 12 at Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), at Dungeness (Kent) on 21st, at Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear) on 23rd and at Sunderland (Tyne & Wear) on 25th.

About 30 **Pomarine Skuas** passed by in the first half of July, with eight off the northeast coast of England, and the rest off Cornwall, with another 30 in the second half of July, mainly in the Southwest and off Irish coasts. There were just seven **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus*, 33 **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* spread along the southwest and the south coasts of England and, unseasonally, two **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* and three **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus*.

At least three, and possibly five, **Great White Egrets** *Egretta alba* included a long-stayer at Stanford Reservoir (Leicestershire/Northamptonshire) during 5th-21st July, and up to 40 **Little Egrets** *E. garzetta* were reported, with a clear influx from mid July onwards.

After the surfeit in the spring, just four **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco tinnunculus* showed in July, and a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* in Devon on 9th was to be the only one of this autumn.

The spell of easterly winds during 4th-7th July carried a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* to Blakeney Point (Norfolk) on 7th, a **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* to Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire) on 10th, and two **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* on 18th, to Chichester Harbour (West Sussex) and to North Warren Marshes (Suffolk). Up to 20 **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were seen through July, mostly along the south coast of England and in East Anglia.

About 30 **Mediterranean Shearwaters** *Puffinus yelkouan* passed by after 9th July, mainly off the southwest coast of England, and 30 **Great Shearwaters** *P. gravis*, a few **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea*, and 15

Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* flew by Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 14th-15th.

Two **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba*, at Bridlington (Humberside) on 15th July and at Cape Wrath (Highland) on 20th, a **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala*, adding to the numbers in spring, on North Ronaldsay on 15th, and a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* near Didcot (Oxfordshire) on 18th July were typical southerly overshooters.

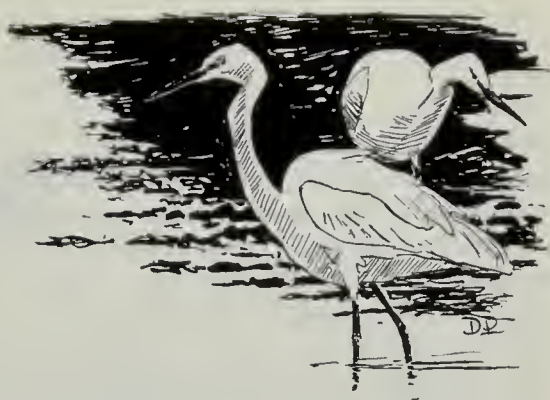
Less unexpected perhaps was a **Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca* at Trimley (Suffolk) on 16th July. There was an inland movement of **Common Scoters** *M. nigra*, with 60 in the West Midlands from 12th July to mid August, five in inland Suffolk during 10th-16th July and seven on the London reservoirs; 450 **Common Pochards** *Aythya ferina* on Staines Reservoir was a noteworthy July count.

After a cool beginning to July, the temperatures over eastern England increased sharply from 15th to 19th, to reach a maximum of 26°C. This initiated insect flight activity, and thus avian aerial feeders became prominent, particularly **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia*, with 2,000 over Sandwich Bay (Kent), and a continuous movement at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) during 17th-21st, with a maximum of 5,090 on 19th, travelling with smaller numbers of **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* and **Common Swifts** *Apus apus*. On the same day, a **Pallid Swift** *A. pallidus* arrived at Flamborough Head (Humberside), again in company with Common Swifts.

The regular waders were thin on the ground, not helped by high water levels with the corresponding loss of muddy margins. **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were one exception, and included among the many inland records were nine in the London area from 11th July, a peak of 110 at Welney (Norfolk/Cambridgeshire), about 100 in the West Midlands between 7th July and early September, and 312 at Inner Marsh Farm (Cheshire) and 517 at Fairhaven (Lancashire) at the end of July.

Counts of **Common Greenshanks** *Tringa nebularia* were only modest, with the highest at Holbeach (Lincolnshire) with 86 on 19th July, at Farlington (Hampshire) with 53 and Havergate (Suffolk) with 40. **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* were, however, living up to their name, and good counts were 28 at Seaforth (Merseyside) and 45 on the River Clwyd at Rhyl (Clwyd) on 20th July.

A **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* appeared at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 21st July, a **European Serin** *Serinus serinus* at Portland (Dorset) on 22nd, a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana*



porzana at Minsmere on 24th and an early **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* at Portland on 26th July. A high-tide roost of **Dunlins** *Calidris alpina* reached 3,800 at Gibraltar Point on 31st July and the next day an equally diligent observer counted 393 **Mute Swans** *Cygnus olor* at the mouth of the River Tweed (Northumberland). A **Surf Scoter** in Grampian, a **Purple Heron** on the Oare Marshes (Kent) and a **Pacific Golden Plover** on North Ronaldsay, all on 1st August, probably converged from three directions, but approaching from the south were more **Little Egrets**. About 85 were reported during August, including ten in West Charleton Bay (Devon), 11 in Poole Harbour (Dorset), 11 in Pegwell Bay (Kent), and at least 11 on the Hampshire coast between Calshot and Keyhaven. There were up to 22 on Jersey (Channel Islands) by the end of August.

Mixed fortunes

For those whose expectations during August turn towards waders and seabirds, elation and disappointment would have been evenly balanced. On the plus side, a **Red-necked Stint** stayed at Cley from 2nd to 3rd August, with a **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* there during 5th-8th, and probably the same individual at East Tilbury (Essex) during 10th-14th August. On the other hand, seabird passage was, with some exceptions, poor. Mean sea-level pressure was below normal over the whole of northwest Europe, and this month ranked alongside the most cyclonic Augusts of the century. Following this cyclonic activity, the sea-surface temperatures in the North Atlantic and waters around Britain and Ireland were much below normal (per The Royal Meteorological Society), and, although many mysteries still surround seabird movements, it is clear that this situation would have affected the numbers seen around our coasts this autumn. As usual, Porthgwarra (Cornwall) was the place for **Cory's Shearwaters**, with about 160 there up to

10th August, 611 on 11th, and 173 on 12th. There were few after. The only other double-figure count was 11 past Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork) on 2nd August. **Great Shearwaters** totalled fewer than 30, and **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* featured scarcely better, with small numbers down the east coast of England, and about 90 past Porthgwarra during 9th-17th August. A total of 46 **Mediterranean Shearwaters** was seen off Cornwall during 2nd-6th August, the only other record in this period being two at Old Head of Kinsale on 2nd. Porthgwarra also claimed the first of four reports in August of **Little Shearwaters** *P. assimilis*, with one on 9th. There were 12 **Sabine's Gulls** off Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare) on 3rd, the same day that both **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* and **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* arrived in Strathclyde. There were six **Pectoral Sandpipers** in August, with the first at Cresswell Ponds (Northumberland) on 5th.

The very unsettled westerly weather had continued from July as the cyclone track stayed close to northern Scotland. A brief anticyclonic spell occurred, however, as a high-pressure ridge developed on the Continent from 6th August, thereafter moving to Scandinavia. This brought easterlies across the North Sea on 8th and 9th, as a low developed over Britain and Ireland, followed by another tracking across Scotland, bringing further easterlies on frontal systems to Shetland on 12th. During this break from the previously dominant westerlies, a **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* arrived at Prawle Point (Devon) on 6th, and over 20 **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* arrived, then skulked, including 12 at Poole Harbour during 7th-16th. Two **Rosy Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* chose islands as landfalls: on Coll (Strathclyde) on

6th and Lundy (Devon) on 11th. These were two of only six to appear this autumn. The arrival of a **Black Kite** *Mikus migrans* at Diss (Norfolk) on 7th coincided with two **Melodious Warblers** at Christchurch (Dorset); there were to be six more, widely scattered, before the end of August. Following the big spring influx, about 30 **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* appeared, mainly during 8th-23rd August, including eight on Fair Isle. **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* put on a good show, with about 40 after 8th, shared between the Northern Isles, including 14 on Fair Isle, and northeast England. One on North Walney (Cumbria) on 14th was an exception.

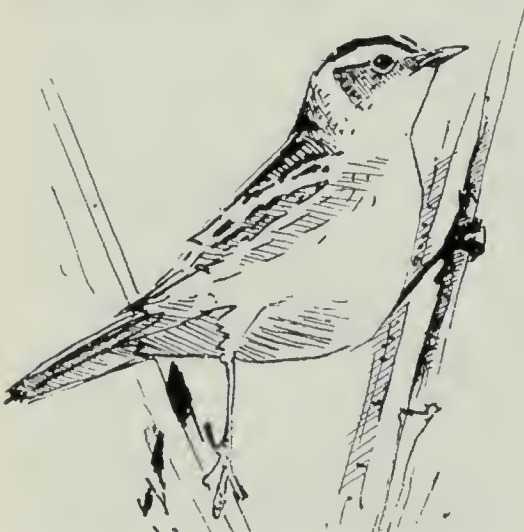
A total of 12 **Pomarine Skuas** flew past our coasts prior to 7th August, there were 130 during 7th-15th, mainly along the east coasts of England and Scotland, and a further 24 during 16th-25th.

Numbers of **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus*, in common with many other waders, remained low, but there was a noticeable inland movement from 9th August through the midland counties of England, and also Suffolk. **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* were moving through as well, with seven at Rosedale Moor (North Yorkshire) on 10th, and another 35 by the end of August, including 12 at St Margaret's Bay on 21st and 15 at Southery Fens (Norfolk) on 26th. Other, rarer waders included a **Pacific Golden Plover** at Pagham Harbour (West Sussex), single **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* in Co. Kerry and Cheshire, a **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* in Norfolk, a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* in Northamptonshire, and **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* on Lundy and at Ballycotton (Co. Cork).

The regular flock of **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* at Gosford Bay (Lothian) reached a peak of 54 on 10th August, the same day that a **Spotted Crake** arrived on Fair Isle, the first of four during the month.

There were 39 **Mediterranean Gulls** in August, including 15 at Bembridge (Isle of Wight) on 11th, and nine **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* included the first for Fair Isle, on 12th, the same day as a **Greenish Warbler** there – an odd couple indeed.

Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* were noted off Whitburn (Tyne & Wear) on 11th August, with 21 north and 112 south, and a **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* was seen at Hengistbury Head (Dorset), also on 11th. **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* were appearing in good numbers, with 40 on





Rainham Marshes (Greater London) on 16th, in the West Midlands, and at several sites in Hampshire, including 24 at Alresford Pond on 14th August. **Black-tailed Godwits** reached 469 on the Suffolk side of the Stour Estuary and at Fairhaven 1,400 were estimated on 11th. The roost of **Common Greenshanks** at Mundon (Essex) topped 130 on 14th.

Catches of **European Storm-petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* on Fair Isle were down on 1991, despite constant effort, but 665 were noted off North Ronaldsay on 16th August.

Reports of large movements of passerines were few, so 290 **Lesser Whitethroats** *Sylvia curruca*, 150 **Common Whitethroats** *S. communis* and 230 **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* at Gibraltar Point on 16th August were of interest, and were probably grounded by the heavy rain which spread eastwards across all areas during 15th-16th. Further falls of **Common Whitethroats** included 200 at Durlleston Country Park (Dorset) on 15th and 100 at Fagbury (Suffolk) on 17th-18th.

A **Green Heron** arrived on Jersey on 17th August (it was to move to Guernsey during September), and reports of nine **Red-necked Phalaropes** (plate 110) were received, mostly after 18th. Two **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 18th, and one was at Ballyheige (Co. Kerry) on 22nd. A **Bridled Tern** at Coquet Island (Northumberland) on 14th was presumably the one off Flamborough Head on 18th, the same day as an **Alpine Swift** at Birling Gap (East Sussex).

There was a wide scatter of inland **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* during August, and there were three or four wandering **Montagu's Harriers** *C. pygargus*, including the first ever on Fair Isle, on 31st August. At least 34 **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* passed through, with peaks of six on 23rd and again on 29th. **Black Terns**, too, were on the move, with over 170 at three London

reservoirs on 19th, and 1,200 past Dungeness on 20th. At Barns Ness, 19 on 13th August was a record count for Lothian.

An all-too-brief **Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin** at Woodbury Common (Devon) on 19th August and a **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* near Rye Harbour on 20th were unfortunately seen by few. The large total of 22 **Arctic Skuas** flew over Staines Reservoir on 22nd, and 170 **Common Terns** *Sterna hirundo* at Barn Elms Reservoir (Greater London) were part of several flocks seen in the London area during 20th-22nd August. **King Eiders** arrived at Sullom Voe (Shetland), Wick (Highland) and Tronda (Shetland) between 21st and 26th.

An intriguing report was of a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* trapped at a Barn Swallow roost at Levington Creek (Suffolk) on 21st August, with another seen at Wareham (Dorset) on 29th—how many others pass unnoticed? **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* were reported after 21st, involving eight individuals, and August reports of **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* reached peaks of ten on 23rd and 13 on 31st.

Light westerlies up to 21st August turned to strong southerlies on 22nd, reaching 40 knots at 1,400 m altitude, and this brought in the most unsettled phase of the month. It was also responsible for **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* being noted inland from 22nd, with 14 at Draycote Water (Warwickshire), four in Derbyshire and four or five in Nottinghamshire. Windblown **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus* were also recovered inland, with four in the London area during 23rd August to 7th September, two in Oxfordshire during 23rd-25th August, and others in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire.

Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* dropped in on Fair Isle, with 550 on 23rd August, but news of an **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* in Shetland was eclipsed by

the arrival, after a return to strong westerly winds, of a **Yellow Warbler** on North Ronaldsay on 24th.

Strong winds also pushed the flock of **Common Scoters**, estimated at 11,000, towards the shore at Cefn Sidan (Dyfed) on 25th August. There were also unprecedented counts of **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* off the Durham coast on 25th, with 485 roosting near Seaham, and 41 between Horden and Blackhall. Curiously, there were no other significant reports of this species from elsewhere.

A **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* and a **Woodchat Shrike** on Fair Isle on 26th August were unusual neighbours, although the latter probably had its origin to the east rather than to the south of Britain. A gathering of 700 **Rock Doves** *Columba livia* on fresh-cut silage fields at Hestingott (Shetland) on 28th was an unusual record.

An intense low of 971 mb developed near the Northern Isles on 30th and 31st August, with resultant very high westerly winds to the south, and southeasterlies to Orkney and Shetland. Seabirds were driven to within sight of the shore, and **Sooty Shearwaters**, which so far had been few, reached 315 along the coast of Cornwall during 28th-31st August, and there were 1,500 past Cape Clear Island on 29th, evidence of the effect of the high winds. There were more **Mediterranean Shearwaters** in the last four days of August, with 165, than during the rest of the month, including 28 at St Ives (Cornwall) on 30th and 40 off Portland Bill on 29th-30th. Earlier, 11 past St Johns Point (Co. Down) on 22nd was a new record count for Northern Ireland. There were also 18 reports of **Long-tailed Skuas** during 27th-31st, and 79 **Pomarine Skuas** in the same period. A total of 240 **Arctic Skuas** moved past Flamborough Head on 30th, and 45 **Leach's Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were seen off Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare) on 28th, and another 45 off Lancashire on 30th-31st.

Waders are powerful fliers and are probably not disturbed so much by strong headwinds. They can react by dropping lower in order to avoid high wind speeds at altitude. Wind speeds of 50 knots at 1,340 m from the southwest on 30th August created conditions

for an impressive, visual migration along the east coast of England, which involved many species. **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* reached a peak of 442 on Havergate Island on 29th, and there were high counts of **Red Knots** *Calidris canutus* moving south, with 16,000 at Gibraltar Point on 29th, and then along the Suffolk coast on 30th: 4,034 off Landguard, 2,475 past Southwold in four hours, 1,400 at Havergate and 2,400 at Benacre. **Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were also involved, including 8,000 at Gibraltar Point on 29th, as were **Great Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula*, with 418 off Landguard, and 615 off Southwold on 30th, and **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola*, with 278 at Landguard, 104 at Minsmere and 145 at Havergate. **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* also featured, with 22 at Benacre, 70 at Havergate and 49 at Minsmere, all on 30th. Of concern, however, was that there was a very low proportion of juveniles involved.

Black-tailed Godwits reached 450 at Holbeach on 31st August, and there were 51 **Common Greenshanks** at Gibraltar Point on 30th. **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* showed strongly, with 575 at Havergate, 400 at Benacre, 295 at Minsmere and 1,824 off Landguard, again on 30th. On the previous day, 5,500 had gathered at Gibraltar Point, and, on the English west coast, 110 between Clevedon and the Yeo Estuary (Avon) was an exceptional count for the area. Inland, 30 at King George V Reservoir, 40 at Walthamstow Reservoir (Greater London) and 68 at Rookery Clay-pit (Bedfordshire), all on 30th, were notable.

Yet more **Black Terns** were involved, with 100 off Southwold on 30th August, and ten past Skokholm on 31st was a significant local record. **Common Terns**, too, were moving through southeast England, with 400 at King George V Reservoir and 116 at Barn Elms, and a mixed flock of 700 past Dungeness, which also included **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea*.

Farther north, the same weather brought together **Arctic Warbler** and **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* on North Ronaldsay, and **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* and **Greenish Warbler** on Fair Isle. On 31st August, further discoveries in the Northern

FACING PAGE

103. Top, Desert Warbler *Sylvia uana*, Plymouth, Devon, October 1992 (Paul Hopkins)

104. Centre, Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppellii*, Holme, Norfolk, September 1992 (R. Chittenden)

105. Bottom, Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Holme, Suffolk, September 1992 (David Tipling/Avian Photos)



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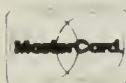
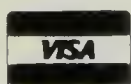
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106 & 109. Top left and above, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (and Pectoral Sandpiper* *Calidris melanotos* in left-hand plate), Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, September 1992
(Paul Hopkins)

107. Left, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Overstrand, Norfolk, October 1992
(R. Chittenden)

The inclusion of colour plates in this feature has been subsidised by a donation from the sponsors of the Rarities Committee:



108. Bottom left, Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Radipole Lake, Dorset, October 1992
(Barry Mitchell)

110. Below, Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Sidlesham Ferry, West Sussex, August 1992
(Barry Mitchell)





Isles totalled 14 **Wrynecks**, 120 **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis*, 60 **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* and smaller numbers of **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava*, **Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, **Garden Warblers** *Sylvia borin* and **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca*. In other years, such a fall would almost pass without mention. In any year, however, the arrival of a long-awaited rarity, Britain's fourth **Rüppell's Warbler** on 31st, at Holme (Norfolk), would have been treated to equal reverence. It stayed until 1th September, and was one of the more well-watched rarities of the autumn (plate 104).

With its uplifted status, **Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus cachinnans* will receive more attention, and we received many reports: six in the West Midlands, six in Bedfordshire, 11 in Buckinghamshire, others in Devon and Derbyshire, up to 12 at Chew Valley Lake during September, from Nottinghamshire, and Dungeness, with 16 on 26th July. The largest concentration, however, was at Rainham, where the flock built up to 200 during the second half of August.

The unsettled westerly weather continued into September, with a frontal system passing quickly from mid Atlantic on 1st to reach Scandinavia by 3rd September. A **Blue-winged Teal** was found at Martin Mere on 3rd, but the most sought-after transatlantic visitor was a **Western Sandpiper** at North Slob (Co. Wexford) on 3rd; nearby, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** in Co. Cork and a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* on 4th were a good support cast. The passage of cyclone centres over Scandinavia brought northeasterly winds off Lapland and northerlies to Orkney and Shetland on 4th and 5th.

The next visitors to draw attention were from the east, with **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata* on the Isle of May on 2nd September and on Foula on 4th, single **Arctic Warblers** at Sumburgh (Shetland) on 4th and on North Uist (Western Isles) on 5th, when there was a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* on Fair Isle and yet another **Greenish Warbler**, at Blakeney.

About 90 **Mediterranean Shearwaters** were reported in September, mostly prior to 12th, and there were six **Little Shearwaters** in the first seven days. A good passage of **Leach's Storm-petrels** up to 18th included three-figure counts of 116 from Hilbre (Cheshire) on 4th and 166 at Usiad Point (Strathclyde) on 15th. **Sooty Shearwaters** were still scarce, with the highest September counts of 27 at Fife Ness (Fife), and 79 at St Ives on 18th, and there were just nine **Cory's Shearwaters** up to 7th.

Pirates, winter visitors and waves of terns

Arctic Skuas were also moving, with 223 past Flamborough Head and 114 past Holme on 4th September, 112 heading north past Whitburn on 5th and, in the Southwest, 150 past Hope's Nose (Devon) on 6th. Bringing a chill of winter were the first **Whooper Swans** *Cygnus cygnus*, with four on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 5th, with **Pink-footed Gecse** *Anser brachyrynchos* not far behind, with ten on Fair Isle and 55 on North Ronaldsay on 12th, and 22 on Fetlar on 13th.

Further waves of **Pomarine Skuas** totalled 77 during 1st-5th September and then 91 on 6th, when 120 **Long-tailed Skuas**, mainly along the south coast of England, and 400 **Arctic Skuas** off Portland Bill, were reported. This same day was witness to an incredible passage of **Black Terns**, with a total of 861 counted in the London area, including 265 at Barn Elms, 250 at West Thurrock, 160 at Barking and 122 at Staines Reservoir, surpassed by the magnificent sight of 10,215 past Dungeness. Another movement took place on 11th, mainly through the midland counties of England, with 700 in Northamptonshire, 260 in Nottinghamshire, 220 in Derbyshire, 137 at Farnoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire), 1,696 at 12 localities in the West Midlands, including 300 at Blythfield and 350 at Draycote, 120 at Grahams Water (Cambridgeshire) and 120 at Stewartby Lake (Bedfordshire). On both days, 6th and 11th, weather conditions were very similar, with westerly winds at altitude of between 30-35 knots, and we can only surmise that these birds found comfort by dropping down and moving through at a lower altitude in order to avoid the strong head winds. Given that Black Terns are prone to gather in enormous numbers at favoured staging posts, the flocks moving through southern Britain must have been a significant proportion of the northern and eastern European population.

Also on 11th September came 23 **Little**

Terns *Sterna albifrons* to Queen Mary Reservoir (Surrey) and a **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* to Nottinghamshire, the first there since 1981. There were also eight **White-winged Black Terns** reported on 11th, to add to the four earlier in the month, and there were to be three more during 12th-13th.

In between this period of great interest in the south, St Kilda played host, briefly, on 10th September, to Britain's second-ever **Hooded Warbler**, 22 years after the first. The next day, a cold front brought rain and strong westerly winds, and cool and very changeable weather returned until mid month.

Three early **Horned Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* appeared at Brora (Sutherland) on 13th September, the same day as **Meadow Pipits** *Aulus pratensis* were noted, with 675 through Whitburn and over 1,000 at Gibraltar Point; 600 descended on Fair Isle on 14th, followed by, in Hampshire, on 19th, 200 at Hayling and 260 at Beacon Hill, followed by another 1,500 at Gibraltar Point and 590 at Drakelow (Derbyshire) on 20th.

Apart from one or two days, westerlies dominated up to 16th September, bringing in a **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* to Fair Isle on 13th (the first there), **Baird's Sandpipers** at Rhosneigr (Gwynedd) on 14th and on Tory Island (Co. Donegal) on 20th, and an **American Wigeon** to Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) on 15th. Almost a year to the day after the first came Britain's second mainland **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, to Portland on 14th, and, in a return to previous form, 51 **Pectoral Sandpipers** (plate 106) were reported, with 25 occurring during 16th-20th. There were 16 **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tyugites subruficollis* (plates 106 & 109), mostly after 19th.

Visitors from more southerly climes included a **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* on St Mary's (Scilly) on 13th September and a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Portland Bill on 16th. Of 74 **Little Egrets** in September, up to 15 occurred in Poole Harbour and 22 were on Jersey.

At last, easterlies

On 17th September, long-awaited high pressure built up over Scandinavia, and this persisted until the end of September, maintaining a southeasterly airflow across Europe. The effect was immediate, with arrivals including 68 **Richard's Pipits** *Aulus novaeseelandiae*, with 11 on North Ronaldsay on 27th, and five on Fair Isle on 30th, 12 **Red-throated Pipits** *A. cervinus*, three **Lanceolated Warblers** *Locustella lauceolata*, on Scat Ness on 17th, on Out Skerries on 19th and on Fair Isle on 27th, and a rush of **Common Rosefinches**, with about 27 in Shetland and 17 elsewhere. After 20 **Wrynecks** had appeared in early September, another 80 were reported after 17th, and there were five **Yellow-breasted Buntings** *Eubleriza aureola* during 17th-21st, including a well-watched individual at Holme (plate 105); four more arrived during 26th-27th. About 50 **Icterine Warblers** showed, with 12 during 11th-15th and 23 during 17th-23rd, and ten **Melodious Warblers** during 17th-26th. The arrival of a **Caspian Tern** at St Margaret's Bay on 18th coincided with eight **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* during 18th-22nd and a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* at Kilminning (Fife). Remarkably, there was a second there on 28th.

Barred Warblers featured prominently, with about 50 September records, half of which were during 17th-23rd, and so did **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus*, with about 115-125 reported, 40 of them in Shetland after 20th, and there were 23 on North Ronaldsay on 27th, the peak day, with probably 62 in Britain. The majority were in the Northern Isles, eastern Scotland and northeast England. As often, **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were co-travellers, and 27 arrived after 18th, and, of 35 September records of **Red-backed Shrike**, 19 were during 18th-23rd. The good scatter of **Ortolan Buntings** which occurred after 18th had a more southwesterly bias, with 11 in Scilly and seven at Lavernock Point (South





Glamorgan). There were seven **Little Buntings** *Emberiza pusilla* during 19th-29th, and a **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* reached Knaresborough (North Yorkshire) on 19th.

Common species, too, were involved in this passage, with 125 **Hedge Accentors** *Prunella modularis* at Gibraltar Point on 19th September, the same day as 37 **Sandwich Terns** moved through the London reservoirs, and 15 **Grey Wagtails** *Motacilla cinerea* passed through Drakelow on 20th.

Rarities, however, were still arriving at an exciting pace, and a **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* on Out Skerries on 20th September was the first Shetland record away from Fair Isle, and there was to be another, at Flamborough Head on 27th. There was a **Bonelli's Warbler** at Filey on 19th, and probably the same one again on 27th-28th (plate 111). Of the nine **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* reported during 22nd-30th, six were in Shetland, but by comparison five out of the six **Woodchat Shrikes** during 18th-29th were in southwest England. North Ronaldsay continued to steal the show, with a **Yellow-browed Bunting** *Emberiza chrysophrys* on 22nd, followed the next day by a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*.

During 22nd-26th September, 13 **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* were reported, and **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* reached a peak of 12 at Minsmere on 23rd, but elsewhere they remained very scarce. Somebody was still out there counting our common species, however, and reports included 544 **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* at Chew Valley Lake, with 107 at Blagdon Lake on 23rd.

Moving south were **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis*, with flocks of up to 70 over Shetland from 24th September, and also **Brent Geese** *B. bernicla*, with 4,455 past Landguard on 30th; 200 were at Gibraltar Point on 26th, which was early for Lincolnshire, but included few juveniles.

Inland, a good record for Richmond Park (Greater London) was a **Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* on 26th September, and further movements of **Meadow Pipits** were noted, with 1,400 at Fairhaven, 355 flying south at Fleet (Hampshire), and 350 at Beacon Hill, all on 26th, and 400 at Queen Mother Reservoir

(Berkshire) and 544 at Sandwich Bay, both on 28th.

Wader counts at this time included high concentrations of **Red Knots**, with 50,000 at Gore Point (Norfolk) on 26th September, and 35,000 at Gibraltar Point on 27th, where there were also 3,000 **Grey Plovers** on 26th.

Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* on North Ronaldsay on 27th September and Stronsay (Orkney) on 28th, a **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* at Dungeness on 27th and **Rustic Buntings** *Emberiza rustica* at Spurn, Out Skerries and Sumburgh on 27th, and Scat Ness on 29th, a **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* on Tresco (Scilly) on 28th and a **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* at Sumburgh on 29th were the result of the continuing winds from the south and southeast. More regular species involved were **Grey Wagtails** on 28th, with 15 over Little Marlow (Buckinghamshire), six at Gibraltar Point and a few through Sandwich Bay. **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* were arriving in force on 27th, with 255 at Gibraltar Point, 300 on Fair Isle, 625 on North Ronaldsay, and then 200 on the Isle of May on 28th. **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* were also noticeable, with 500 at Fagbury on 28th and 100 on Unst (Shetland), and there was some evidence from southern English counties of an influx of **Eurasian Jays** *Garrulus glandarius* at the end of September. Both **Redwings** *Turdus iliacus* and particularly **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* were rather fewer than expected, but **Robins** *Erithacus rubecula* moved into the Northern Isles, with 400 on both North Ronaldsay and Fair Isle on 1st October.

October—a promising start

Black-eared Wheatears *Oenanthe hispanica* arrived at Folkestone (Kent) on 1st October and Dawlish Warren on 2nd, after which a high developed to the west of Scotland and air was brought in from eastern Europe on the northern flank of an extensive low-pressure system centred over north Italy. Cold north to northeast winds covered the country until 13th October. By that date, 32 **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* had arrived, with six in the Northern Isles, eight along the northeast coast of England, and 13 in southeast England. There were seven **Common Rosefinches**

FACING PAGE

111. Top, Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, Filey, North Yorkshire, September 1992 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)

112. Centre, Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Tresco, Scilly, October 1992 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)

113. Bottom, Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1992 (Barry Mitchell)

up to 8th, and 20 **Barred Warblers** up to 10th, about 20 **Red-breasted Flycatchers** up to 7th, but only eight after then, and 11 **Red-backed Shrikes** up to 4th. Somewhat unexpected were eight **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus* arriving before 10th, mainly on the English east coast, and five **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus* in Shetland during 1st-4th, all about a week earlier than the normal autumn peak period. More typical early-October arrivals were **Buff-breasted Sandpipers**, with four up to 4th, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** on Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 1st, 23 **Wrynecks** up to 10th, five **Short-toed Larks** (plate 113) up to 10th, and **Richard's Pipits**, with 30 up to 10th. A **Rosy Starling** on North Ronaldsay on 3rd October proved to be only the sixth for the autumn. Fair Isle played host to five **Olive-backed Pipits** on 4th, and eight were reported from elsewhere on 7th. Of the 12 **Red-throated Pipits** (plate 112), seven were found before 9th. More Siberian visitors were 11 **Common Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata* of the eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*, and an obliging **Siberian Thrush** on North Ronaldsay on 1st, staying until 8th October. Five **Rustic Buntings** reported up to 7th included one at Landguard, the first Suffolk record for 30 years, there were eight **Little Buntings** up to 8th, two **Radde's Warblers** on 3rd-4th, three **Bonelli's Warblers** by 6th October, an **Alpine Swift** at Margate on 3rd, an **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* on Fair Isle on 4th, a **Booted Warbler** on St Martin's (Scilly) on 6th and a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Weybourne (Norfolk) on 7th. Reports of **Yellow-browed Warblers** were still coming in thick and fast: about 200 in October, with peaks of 34 on 4th, including 19 from the northeast coast of England, and then 17 on 11th, which included a good inland record at Marlow (Buckinghamshire) and five in the Southwest, and 19 on 17th, over half of which were in the Southwest. Against this easterly flow, and almost defying logic, was the only **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* of the autumn, at Crookhaven (Co. Cork) on 4th, and a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* on St Mary's on 8th.

Unusual inland records included a **Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus* at Brailsford (Derbyshire) on 7th October, and four **Arctic Skuas** at Swithland Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 4th, when the same county hosted an **American Wigeon** at nearby Eyebrook Reservoir. **Great Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo* continue their inland expansion and high counts included 490 at

Rutland Water, 183 at Staines Reservoir, 151 at Wraybury (Berkshire) and 118 at King George V Reservoir. **Great Crested Grebes** had meanwhile increased to 1,000 at Chew Valley Lake by 4th. Farther north, a **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* arrived on 5th to spend the winter on the Solway (Dumfries & Galloway).

Then the wind, which had promised and delivered so much for the first eight days of October, swung around to the north and then northwest and, with the change, went most of the excitement. The 500 pilgrims on Scilly hurrying to watch a **Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* were probably wishing they were elsewhere – perhaps Hartlepool (Cleveland) on 11th to watch a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea*. For two weeks, rarities, that staple October diet for many birders, were extremely difficult to find. Perhaps some observers counted the 1,140 **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata* at Oldbury Power Station (Avon) on 10th October or the 14,800 **Pink-footed Geese** at Hule Moss on 11th, or went to Rutland Water, where a good series of counts included 619 **Great Crested Grebes**, 485 **Gadwalls** *Anas strepera*, 1,347 **Tufted Ducks** *Aythya fuligula* and 280 **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis*. The last species also featured prominently at Swithland Reservoir, with 115, and at Chew Valley Lake, with 323 on 24th. The count of 237 **Northern Shovelers** *Anas chypseata* was a good number at Wraybury on 18th.



Pomarine surge by

October 1991 was notable for huge numbers of Long-tailed Skuas; this year it was the turn of **Pomarine Skuas** to impress. About 90 had been reported from various coastal stations up to 8th October, but events on 9th

were quite extraordinary. Strong northerly winds starting to the north of Scandinavia channelled Pomarine Skuas into the North Sea. There were 750 off South Gare (Cleveland), 1,090 off Seaton Carew (Cleveland), 540 off Farne Islands, 612 off Lossiemouth (Grampian) and 291 off Seaton Sluice (Northumberland). At Whitburn during 9th-12th, 839 flew north and 60 south, but there was none there during 13th-14th. Few, in fact, were seen anywhere off the northeast coast of England after 12th, but at Hound Point (Lothian) the peak was later, with 788 past in 13 days, including 420 on 16th and 145 on 20th.

There were also good numbers of **Horned Larks** arriving on the East Coast, mainly during 10th-13th October and again during 17th-19th, when there was also one inland in Bedfordshire, only the second county record. From 21st, there were up to 24 at Titchwell and 15 at Blakeney Point. Three in Jersey on 30th October constituted the second to fourth records for the island.

Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* also irrupted impressively into southwest England, with 15 in Devon at four sites from 17th October, and at seven sites in Cornwall. Three were at Dagenham Chase (Essex) on 13th.

Four **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis homemanni* appeared during 16th-18th October, when there were also migrant **Wood Larks** *Lullula arborea* in Shetland and at Staines Reservoir.

Finally, October returned to form with a (now regular?) **Desert Warbler** in Plymouth (Devon) gardens from 19th (plate 103), and a **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* which temporarily relieved the boredom in Scilly on 22nd, with another at Finnstown (Orkney) on 23rd. Fourteen **Richard's Pipits** appeared after 22nd, a **Rustic Bunting** was on North Ronaldsay on 29th, a **Dusky Warbler** at Spurn on 21st and four

Pallas's Leaf Warblers during 27th-30th. Four early **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* were at Cameron (Fife) on 25th October, and there were 1,600 **Black-tailed Godwits** at Oakenholt (Clwyd) on the same day. A **Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima* at Blithfield Reservoir on 28th was a good local find, but most unexpected was a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** at Aldeburgh (Suffolk) on 29th which stayed until 11th November.

The unsettled westerly airflow persisted into November, but, with winds coming with a more southerly bias, temperatures were above average for the month. Perhaps this encouraged the two otherwise unseasonal **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* to linger on, at Kierny Point (Co. Down) and on Salisbury Plain (Wiltshire), and a **Red-rumped Swallow** briefly showed at Truro (Cornwall) on 9th November. Late **Richard's Pipits** included two in Scilly, two in Norfolk and singles at Dungeness, in Cornwall and at Flamborough Head.

Perhaps more typical were the **Pallas's Leaf Warblers**, on Fair Isle on 8th November and at Winspit (Dorset) on 15th, and there were five late **Yellow-browed Warblers**. A **Dusky Warbler** in Cornwall during 6th-13th completed an excellent autumn for that species, but more unusual was a late **Bonelli's Warbler** at Titchwell on 22nd, which may have had its origins to the east rather than the south. Migrant **Goldfinches** *Carduelis carduelis* caused a stir in the Northern Isles, at Birsay (Orkney) and on Fair Isle, and there were ten wandering **Dartford Warblers** at nine sites, mainly along the south and southeast coasts of England.

So ended an autumn that at times promised much, and then often disappointed. In retrospect, it was almost as interesting for what didn't arrive as what did.

Acknowledgments

This summary was compiled from contributions from: Ian Kinley, D. Macdonald, A. McGeehan, E. Meek, P. Murphy, Y. Perlman, Malcolm Rains and Mike Wallen, and published information including that in the newsletters of the Bedfordshire Bird Club, Bristol Ornithological Club, Derbyshire Ornithological Society, Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society, Fife Bird Club, Hampshire Ornithological Society, Hertfordshire Bird Club, La Société Guernesiaise, La Société Jersiaise, Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society, Leigh Ornithological Society, Lincolnshire Bird Club, London Natural History Society, Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers, Shetland Bird Club, Shropshire Ornithological Society, South East Scotland Bird Bulletin, Suffolk Ornithological Group, West Midlands Bird Club, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Gibraltar Point Bird Observatory, Skokholm Bird Observatory and Whitburn Bird Observatory. We are especially grateful to Rare Bird News, which supplied copies of all the records reported to its phone service, and to Birding South West.

Barry Nightingale & Keith Allsopp, 7 Bloomsbury Close, Woburn,
Bedfordshire MK17 9QS



Those Ruddy Ducks

CONCERN over the spread into Europe of our increasing population of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* (introduced into the UK in the 1950s) led to the convening of an International Ruddy Duck Workshop in March 1993 at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Arundel. The nub of the problem is that Ruddy Ducks interbreed with White-headed Ducks *O. leucocephalus* and produce viable hybrids. The less-numerous and less-vigorous White-headed Ducks could well be swamped by the invading Ruddy Ducks, leading to local extinctions of the former. This is particularly so in Spain, where careful conservation has increased the population of White-headed Ducks from 22 in 1977 to 786 in 1992. The Workshop, which attracted 54 experts from ten countries, has recommended action to halt and reverse the range expansion of the Ruddy Duck, including legislation and international agreements, monitoring, research, control measures and public relations.

Bedford's oasis

Many local bird reports reach us and we cannot review them all, but the *Priory Country Park Bird Report 1992*, compiled by David Kramer, does deserve a mention. Typed, but well set out, readable and interesting, with lots of background information, it runs to 66 (infuriatingly unnumbered) pages. Tables, histograms and graphs (by Jon Palmer) and drawings (by Tony Davison) abound. The area covered is that surrounding the flooded gravel-pit by Bedford's marina on the River Ouse just east of the town itself, near the Tesco

superstores. A mere 16 observers have contributed records, but David Kramer's *Report* is worth buying if you're ever likely to have an hour or so to spare in Bedford, for it summarises all records for the area to date (a total of 183 species during 1972-92 including Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* as well as more-expected rarities). It is obtainable, price £2.00, from David Kramer, 7 Little Headlands, Putnoe, Bedford MK41 8JL.

Windrush recruit

David Tomlinson, who runs 'Windrush Photos', the agency which supports our Bird Photograph of the Year award by providing an extra prize for the best photo taken in the UK, has now been joined full-time by David Tipling, whose photographs of rarities have

often been featured in *BB*.

Further details of Windrush Photos can be obtained from either of the two Davids, at Windrush, Coles Lane, Brasted, Westerham, Kent TN16 1NN.

Ailsa Craig buzzed

We reported in March (*Brit. Birds* 86: 143) of the successful eradication of rats *Rattus norvegicus* from Ailsa Craig, which has improved the breeding performance of many seabirds there. But now we read, in *The Seabird Group Newsletter*, no. 64, that there has been a serious problem with low-flying aircraft. It is well known that such disturbances can cause mayhem in seabird colonies. Ailsa Craig was designated, by the RAF, as an area to be avoided, but during 1992 breaches of these regulations had disastrous effects on the breeding Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus* and auks (Alcidae). In mid June, at least 2,000 Gannet chicks or eggs were lost when the entire colony was scattered by a low-flying Hercules transport aircraft which passed very low over the summit eight times. (The American crew, which had flown from Germany, has since apologised.) Then, in July, a light aircraft from Prestwick made a low pass, causing 123 young auks, mostly Common Guillemots *Uria aalge*, to panic and fall off the ledges to their death. These are documented incidents, but how many other colonies suffer losses of this type which are unrecorded?

'Best Bird Book Buys'

The American Birding Association's journal, *Birding*, devotes most of its latest issue (36 pages of vol. 25, no. 1, February 1993) to assessing the world's bird books. After listing scores of other books, the author, Richard E. Webster, nominates two books as his 'Best Buys': *The Birds of Canada* by W. E. Godfrey (1986), and *The Macmillan Field Guide to Bird Identification* by Alan Harris, Laurel Tucker & Keith Vinicombe (1989); on the latter book, he comments: 'This is my nomination for the standard for future bird books . . . artistically exquisite illustrations of complex plumages accompanied by a birder's text. This is the book against which I will measure all others when it comes to a "satisfaction index".'

The European team involved deserves to feel very proud to have received this accolade from its North American peers.

Peregrines on view

There's no doubting it: Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* still pull in the crowds. The RSPB estimates that around half a million people have viewed the breeding Peregrines at Symonds Yat, Gloucestershire. The rock provides not just a superb panorama of the surrounding countryside, but also a view straight into the Peregrines' eyrie. To celebrate the tenth year of watching, Nikon has donated four pairs of binoculars, three spotting-scopes and an angled-body fieldscope. But who needs binoculars when a fledgling perches on the wall of the rock? One did this last year, and similarly one of the chicks which fledged in the Avon Gorge, Bristol, perched on the back of one of the public seats, even allowing a watcher to sit with it. At the Avon Gorge, the watch is mainly for protection, although members of the public are welcome—and it's another spectacular view. There, the principal sponsor is *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, which has provided a mobile telephone. At Derby Dale Quarry on Rishworth Moor, Yorkshire, there is a new hide provided by Yorkshire Water with the help of Calderdale Council and the RSPB. It has surely never been so easy to see breeding Peregrines.

Starlings supreme

Since 1979, the YOC has surveyed garden birds each January and this year 10,000 of its members sent in returns. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* remain the most numerous, being first and second respectively, but Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* has risen from fifth place last year to third, displacing Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* and Blackbird *Turdus merula* to fourth and fifth. New to the top ten this year are Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* and Hedge Accentor (Dunnock) *Prunella modularis*. This continuing survey is a tremendous credit to young birdwatchers; they know that there is value in watching common birds, and it's fun, too. A complete report, with the top-ten tables for every UK county, is available (price 50p) from the YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Set an example

A letter in the latest issue of the American Birding Association's newsletter, *Winging It* (5(3) 8-9), comments on the 'need to be energetic in communicating condemnation of unethical behaviour' and goes on 'Other publications, notably **British Birds**, are unflinching in their criticism of birding excesses, yet no reader is

left with the impression that the magazines are anti-listing, anti-birding, or unenthusiastic about the pleasure of birdwatching in all its manifestations.'

Yep, that's us folks!

The ABA's address is PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, USA.



BOU AGM votes for standard English names

Several years of rumbling misinformation about the BOU's attitude to English names were laid to rest at the Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union in Sunderland on 17th April 1993. The meeting overwhelmingly voted in support of the BOU Records Committee's work on a standard list of English-language names.

Two motions had been submitted in advance of the meeting by Dr W. R. P. Bourne, a member of Council of the BOU. The preamble to the motions repeated an accusation that the Records Committee had acted incorrectly by failing to follow a motion passed at the 1989 AGM of the BOU at Guildford that 'This meeting instructs the Records Committee to desist from further work on a standardised list of vernacular names for British birds'.

Dr Bourne's motions called on the BOU to disown the new English-language names published in the recent 6th edition of the BOU's *Checklist of Birds of Britain and Ireland* (1992), and to stop referring to them as 'English names'.

In response to the motions, Professor Janet Kear, President of the BOU, pointed out that the original 1989 motion had been unconstitutional as it had not been submitted in advance of the AGM in accordance with the Rules of the BOU.

Prof. Kear noted that, nevertheless, the Council of the BOU had discussed the motion fully and felt that, as the Union had published a tentative list of standard English-language names, and had invited comments, it would have been inappropriate to abandon the subsequent replies. Council had instructed the Records Committee to proceed with its work and had been informed of, and approved, all subsequent developments.

Council considered that it was right that the BOU should be involved in discussions about the proposed world list of English-language names, which was being prepared under the auspices of the International Ornithological Congress. Council had also approved the Records Committee's proposals that new English-language names should be published in the 6th edition of the *Checklist* alongside the existing vernacular* names and the scientific ones.

Following a discussion from the floor, including a forceful opposition of Dr Bourne's motions by Dr Jeremy Greenwood (one of the proposers of the Guildford motion), in which he accepted that the 1989 motion had been unconstitutional, the motions were put to the meeting.

Both failed to find anyone willing to second them. Nevertheless, to make the Union's position quite clear, Prof. Kear allowed a vote to take place, but the motions attracted only the single vote in favour, the remainder of the meeting being opposed to their adoption.

After the meeting, Prof. Kear said 'I hope this ends the confusion about the BOU's attitude to English-language names. The Records Committee has the full support of Council in all aspects of its work. The Committee will continue to monitor comments on a standard list of English-language names and will send these through to the group working on the world list.'

*This word is used in the BOU Press release, but we consider that it is correct to restrict the meaning of 'vernacular names' to those used commonly in speech (e.g. 'Pinkfoot' rather than 'Pink-footed Goose'). EDS.

Eric Hosking Trust

The Trust, formed to commemorate the life and work of the late Eric Hosking, will provide bursaries for ornithological writers, photographers and artists (*Brit. Birds* 86: 147). Its work was recently given two boosts. First, in April, the Lavenham Wildlife Art Gallery hosted an exhibition of Eric's classic photographs, such as the striking European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* shown here (plate 114). Secondly, HarperCollins, publisher of the beautiful new book featuring the best of Eric's

many photographs, *Eric Hosking's Classic Birds*, donated 1,000 specially bound and cased copies of the book to the Trust. Numbered copies of the special limited edition are available through our British BirdShop (see pages vii & viii), or, price £50.00 (+ £3.00 p&p), from David Hosking, The Eric Hosking Trust, Pages Green House, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QA, from whom a few copies signed by all the Trustees are also available, price £100.00 (+ £3.00 p&p).

114. Female European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* alighting beside young, Tangham, Suffolk, summer 1949 (*Eric Hosking*)

Hong Kong Big Bird Race

On 9th and 10th April, 17 teams of four observers competed in this year's Hong Kong Big Bird Race. The one-day record of 164 was beaten by two teams, the highest total being 171. The total number of species seen by all teams was 226 and included Spoonbill Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*, Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and 38 other species of wader, as well as Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* (over 10% of the world population), Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi*, Falcated Duck

Anas falcata and Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides*.

Most importantly, however, a total of about £135,000 was raised for the WWF-HK Mai Po Marshes Reserve, to be spent on management and educational work. An indication of how far this event has come in the last eight years is revealed by comparison with the 1985 figures: two teams saw 124 species, highest score 110, and they raised £3,000 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 157). (Contributed by Geoff Carey)

Oil threat to Pembrokeshire islands

Licences were granted in March by the Department of Trade and Industry to the Marathon Oil Company for drilling in blocks in Cardigan Bay off the Pembrokeshire coast. Licences for other blocks will be given shortly. The granting of licences for these blocks in the fourteenth round of offshore licensing is going ahead despite strong opposition by, amongst others, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the RSPB, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Dyfed Wildlife Trust and the Cardigan Bay Forum. All these bodies argued that it was unacceptable for the Government to allow oil exploration close to such sensitive sites as the Pembrokeshire islands. The islands of Grassholm, Ramsey, Skomer and Skokholm are all Special Protection Areas under the EC Wild Birds Directive; they boast the second largest gannetry in northern Europe (30,000 pairs of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*); they support up to 140,000 pairs of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* (57% of the British population), up to 7,000 pairs of European Storm-

petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* and over 13,000 Puffins *Fratercula arctica*; whilst Ramsey holds the largest colony of grey seals *Halichoerus grypus* in southwest Britain. In addition, the southern part of Cardigan Bay is one of only two areas around Britain that supports a resident school of bottle-nosed dolphins *Tursiops truncatus*.

Hamilton Oil & Gas Company is already drilling for oil and gas off the tip of the Llyn Peninsula, less than 16 km from the important island of Bardsey in North Wales; this company was recently given approval by the Welsh Office to construct a terminal at Talacre, at the Point of Air by the Dee Estuary, where gas and oil will be brought ashore from Hamilton's discoveries in Liverpool Bay.

Whilst oil companies promise every contingency possible to prevent oil spills, it is difficult, from past accidents, to believe that the future of seabirds breeding on Welsh islands and wintering on Welsh estuaries is now truly secure. (Contributed by Dr Stephanie Tyler)



Book classification

We liked Bill Oddie's comment and proposal, made when reviewing *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* (Dutch Birding 15: 28). We quote: 'Why do they call these things "Handbooks"? Surely it's not 'cos you can lift them up with your hand? Fork-lift truck books more like!'.

New Recorder

R. O. Hunt, 9 Waun Road, Llanelli, Dyfed SA15 3RS, has taken over from D. H. V. Roberts as Recorder for Carmarthenshire (Dyfed).

Ivel Valley

BB's headquarters at Blunham lie beside the River Ivel, a tributary of the River Ouse which flows into The Wash. A scheme has just been launched to (1) create new footpaths, bridleways and cycleways, (2) develop a long-distance path along the Ivel Valley, together with circular walks and rides, (3) protect and enhance existing wildlife habitats, and (4) create or restore landscape features and wildlife habitats, such as ponds, water-meadows, reedbeds and pollarded willows.

The ambitious Ivel Valley Countryside Project is being funded by Bedfordshire County Council, Mid Bedfordshire District Council, the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire and the Countryside Commission. In a few years' time, the Ivel Valley should not only provide additional recreational facilities for the 45,000 local human residents, but also be considerably better for wildlife.

Welsh Black Grouse still in decline

Despite considerable efforts over the last five years to improve habitats for Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in north and mid Wales, this gamebird has continued to decline. A census organised in 1992 by the RSPB and part-funded by the Countryside Council for Wales revealed a total of only 210 males on 133 leks. This represents a decline of 10% on the 1986 total of 232 males. In one of its strongholds, the Berwyn Mountains, the Black Grouse population has shown a decline of 49% since 1988.

Black Grouse numbers increased in Wales up until the early 1970s, when many conifer forests were newly planted or in young stages. As large blocks of conifers in upland Wales have matured and as overgrazing by sheep over recent decades has gradually eliminated heather from most unplanted moors, Black Grouse have rapidly declined.

Intensive management is currently being undertaken by conservation bodies and by the Forest Enterprise and several private forest companies to try to halt the decline. (Contributed by Dr Stephanie Tyler)

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

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Dave Holman—East Anglia

Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland

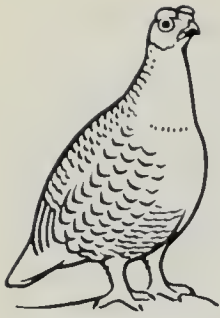
David Tomlinson—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

Keith Vinicombe—Southwest

John Wilson—Northwest





Reviews

Bird Life of Coasts and Estuaries. By Peter Ferns. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992. 336 pages; 19 black-and-white plates; 15 line-drawings by Chris Rose. ISBN 052-134 569-3. £29.95.

The coasts of the world's land masses provide many important bird habitats, and as a consequence many bird species are peculiar to them. This book sets out to review the use made by birds of these habitats, considering successively the coastal environment, the open sea, rocky shores, cliffs and shingle beaches, and the 'coastal fringe'. The final chapter considers the threats to coastal and estuary birds, and it will be no surprise that this is as long as any of the others.

Although each chapter includes some fascinating sections on the behavioural adaptations of the various species to their particular environment, the emphasis is very much on habitat. Consequently, this book is not for you if you wish to learn of the life histories of the different coastal species, though much of this information is there. The emphasis is on the British Isles, though examples chosen worldwide are included.

The book is most attractively produced, with numerous line-drawings and graphs illustrating concepts discussed in the text, together with a number of quite delightful line-illustrations by Chris Rose. In addition there is a selection of photographs of both birds and their habitats. The list of references is considerable, occupying 34 pages, some being as recent as 1991.

This book can be strongly recommended to all those who have an interest in the coastal and marine environment and its importance for bird-life.

R. J. CHANDLER

The Vultures of Africa. By Peter Mundy, Duncan Butchart, John Ledger & Steven Piper. Academic Press, London. 460 pages; numerous line-drawings, photographs and colour plates. ISBN 0-12-510585-1. £55.00.

Do not be misled by the title: though this book is indeed about the vultures of Africa, it is far more wide-ranging, and lively, than you might expect. It starts with a global survey of vultures, including an up-to-date discussion of taxonomy, and then ranges from vulture evolution, and the species accounts, through to a series of fascinating chapters on vulture biology. It concludes with a thoughtful piece on vultures in modern Africa. Add in numerous useful tables, a comprehensive bibliography and even a chapter on the Vulture Study Group, and you have a remarkably entertaining book.

Entertaining? Yes, for all four authors are clearly vulture enthusiasts, and this enthusiasm for their subject comes through in every aspect of this work. It really is readable, and full of thought-provoking ideas and theories. Excellent picture research enhances the visual appeal, but Duncan Butchart's pencil drawings are rather more successful than his colour plates.

There is an inevitable Southern African bias in the presentation, not only because all four authors are based south of the Zambezi, but also because the vultures of Southern Africa have been the most studied. What the book does highlight is our lack of knowledge of vultures in North Africa: where, for example, do the thousands of Eurasian Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* go when they move south into Africa from their European breeding grounds? Hopefully, this fine book will provoke much greater interest in this fascinating, but endangered, group of birds.

DAVID TOMLINSON



Monthly marathon

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The wader in plate 51 was named as:

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* (26%), Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (22%), Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (16%), Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (14%), Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* (7%), Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (4%), Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (3%), and five other species.

It was a Western Sandpiper photographed by Dr Richard Chandler in Texas, USA, in August 1992. The score for the correct identification is 86; add this to your scores for the previous three photos in the current Marathon; the next stage is provided by plate 115, below.



115. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149, sixth stage; photo no. 85). Identify the species. Send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th August 1993



Request and Announcement

Rarity descriptions It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major spring rarities are submitted by mid July at the latest. *Please do not wait until the end of the year.* Thank you.

M. J. ROGERS

Secretary BBRC, Bag End, Churchtown, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AX

Rarities Committee's next new member A vacancy will occur in the ranks of the British Birds Rarities Committee on or before 1st April 1994 from resignation or the longest-serving member's automatic retirement. As usual, the Rarities Committee invites nominations, which should be sent to me by 31st December 1993. If there is more than one nomination, a postal election will take place, in which county and regional recorders and bird observatories will be invited to vote.

Qualifications required for membership of the Rarities Committee include a widely acknowledged expertise in identification, a proven reliability in the field, the ability to express one's self clearly and accurately on paper and the willingness to set aside ten to 12 hours of spare time each week throughout the year.

PETER LANSDOWN

Chairman BBRC, 197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 17th May to 13th June 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Little Crosby (Merseyside), 18th May; near Coventry (West Midlands), 7th June.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* At least ten, mostly males, from Co. Down to Co. Londonderry, more than usual (breeding has never been proved in Northern Ireland).

Corn Crake *Crex crex* Numbers down in Northern Ireland, with noticeably fewer than in previous years even in Co. Fermanagh, the main stronghold.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Three, Frodsham (Cheshire), 16th May to 7th June, then at Radley Gravel-pit (Oxfordshire), 8th June to at least 13th June; Leighton Moss (Lancashire), 4th-6th June; Dungeness (Kent), and near Bridlington (Humberside), 8th June; Trimley St Mary (Suffolk), at least on 13th June.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* Gimmingham (Norfolk), 17th May to at least 1st June, then Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 4th June, then Burnham Norton (Norfolk), 6th to at least 13th June.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Minsmere (Suffolk), 1st June.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* 1,253 off North Uist (Western Isles), 18th May, but few elsewhere.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Earls Barton Gravel-pit (Northamptonshire), 29th May.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* Cley (Norfolk), 30th May.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Lough Ree (Co. Offaly), 29th May.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 5th-6th June.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Blakeney Point, 27th May.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 17th May, and Lerwick (Shetland), 20th and 23rd May.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* Fair Isle (Shetland), 25th-27th May.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dunetorum* North Ronaldsay, 19th May.

Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* Geosetter (Shetland), 22nd-25th May; Elmley RSPB Reserve (Kent), 27th May to 11th June; Titchwell RSPB Reserve (Norfolk), 11th to at least 13th June.

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* St Abb's Head (Borders), 23rd-27th May.

Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala* Dungeness, 28th-29th May.

Desert Warbler *S. nana* Blakeney Point, 27th May to at least 1st June.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Martin's Haven (Dyfed), 18th May.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* Fair Isle, 20th May.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* Cape Clear Island, 5th-6th June.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Lundy (Devon), 24th-27th May; Rame Head (Cornwall), 27th-28th May; Delabole (Cornwall), 27th-31st May; Purlbrook (Humberside), 28th May; Dungeness, 30th May.

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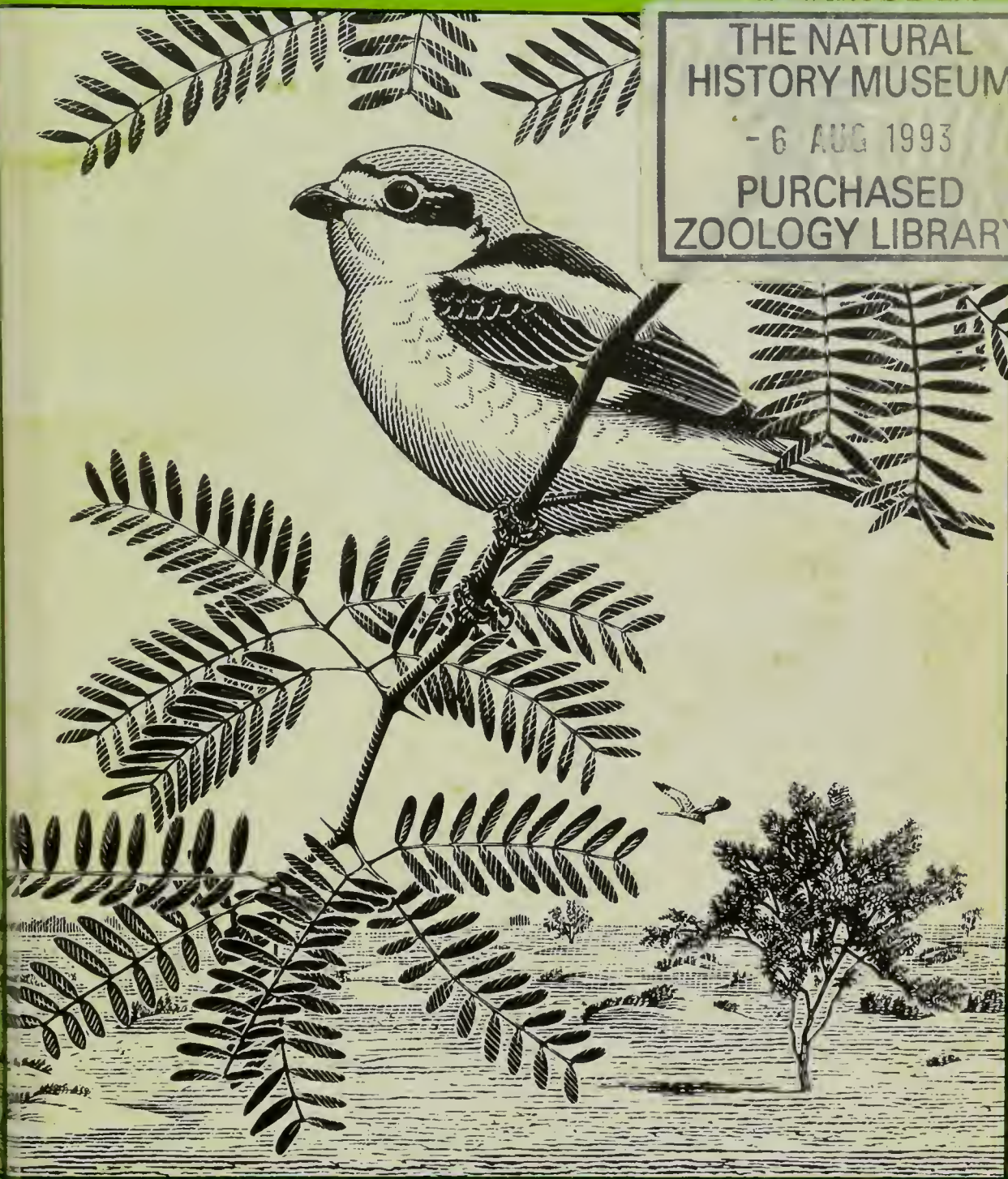
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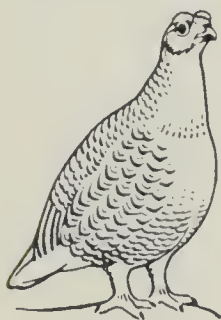
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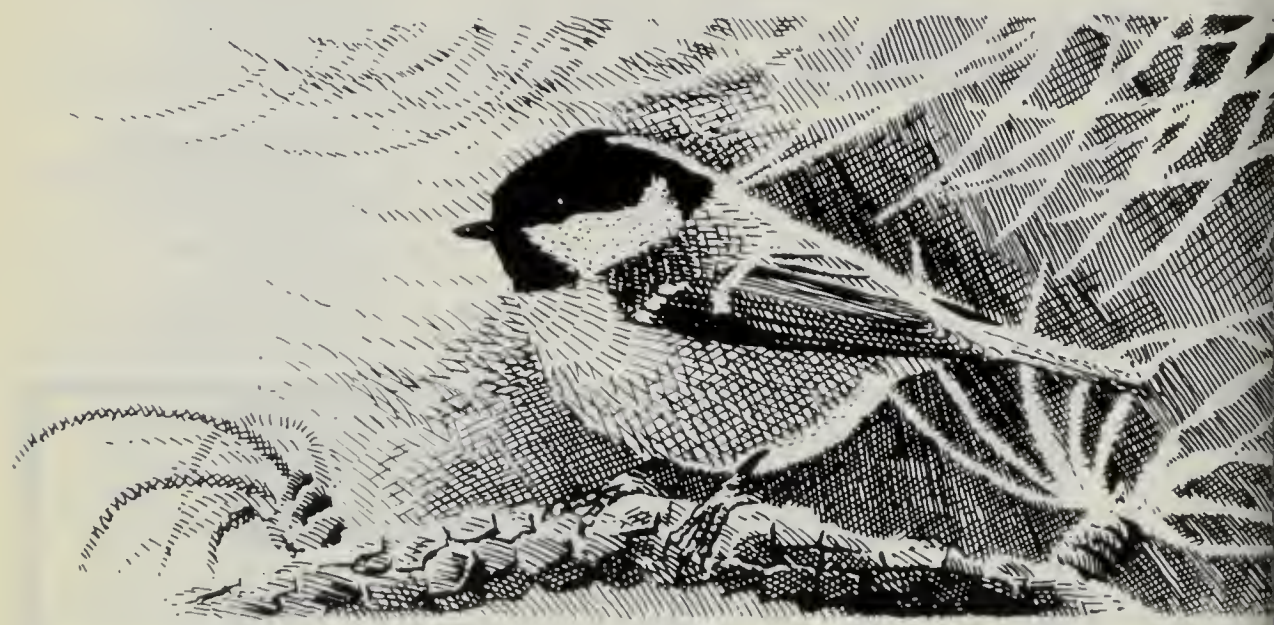
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Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)

Gordon Trunkfield – Bird Illustrator of the Year 1993

Attracting entries from the very best British artists, the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition, sponsored by Kowa Telescopes, provides both an opportunity to display their undoubted talent and, for some, an introduction to a new and satisfying career in the world of illustrating the vast number of ornithological books published today.

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British Birds

VOLUME 86 NUMBER 8 AUGUST 1993

'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'

Sponsored by



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Each artist entering this testing competition has to submit a set of four black-and-white illustrations, drawn to precise dimensions. Thus, these are not drawings which the artist happens to have done and which have, on a whim, been submitted for this competition; the set of drawings must have been drawn especially as a Bird Illustrator of the Year entry. This year, 45 artists entered the competition; with the dedication and discipline that is required, it is very pleasing that we continue to receive so many sets-of-four of such a high general standard. The four judges look forward to the judging day and take great pleasure in viewing the array of excellent illustrations in many different styles.

From a final short-list of five, this year's three winners were:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1993

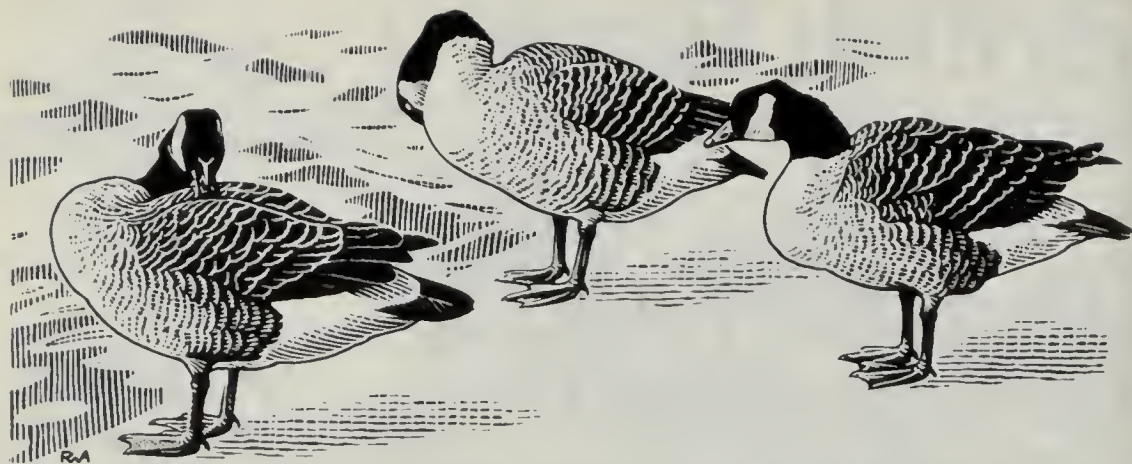
1st Richard Allen (Fingringhoe, Essex)

2nd Dan Powell (Farcham, Hampshire)

3rd Ren Hathway (Treseo, Isles of Scilly)

John M. Walters (Buckfastleigh, Devon) was placed fourth and Peter M. Leonard (Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey) was placed fifth. The initial short-list also included Antony Disley (Lancashire), John Hollyer (Kent), Ernest Leahy (Hertfordshire), Barry Kent MacKay (Canada), Michael Webb (Isle of Wight) and Kester Wilson (Leicestershire).

Our previous annual texts have often included suggestions and constructive criticism, and we recommend that these be consulted by any artists keen to improve their work or interested in finding a possible reason for not having achieved a place among the winners. It is, for instance, surprising to us that we still find examples (even within the work of accomplished artists) of pipits *Anthus* the size—by comparison with nearby leaves—of Capercaillies *Tetrao*



Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*, River Thames, Richmond (Richard Allen)

urogallus. Since the entries are judged as sets, not as individual pieces of artwork, a single such boob can ruin an artist's chances of winning the title.

The judges are always glad to be able to award two other prizes associated with Bird Illustrator of the Year. A trust fund, set up in memory of the Norfolk bird-artist R. A. Richardson, enables us each year to select the winner



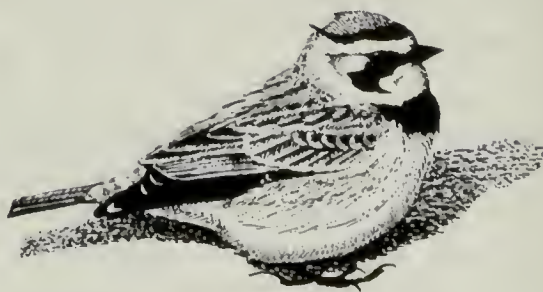
Male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* singing, Santon Downham, The Brecks (Richard Allen)



Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* and Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*, Cornwall, autumn 1992 (Ren Hathway)



Drake Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima* on the Ythan Estuary, Scotland (Dan Powell)



Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* (Ren Hathway)

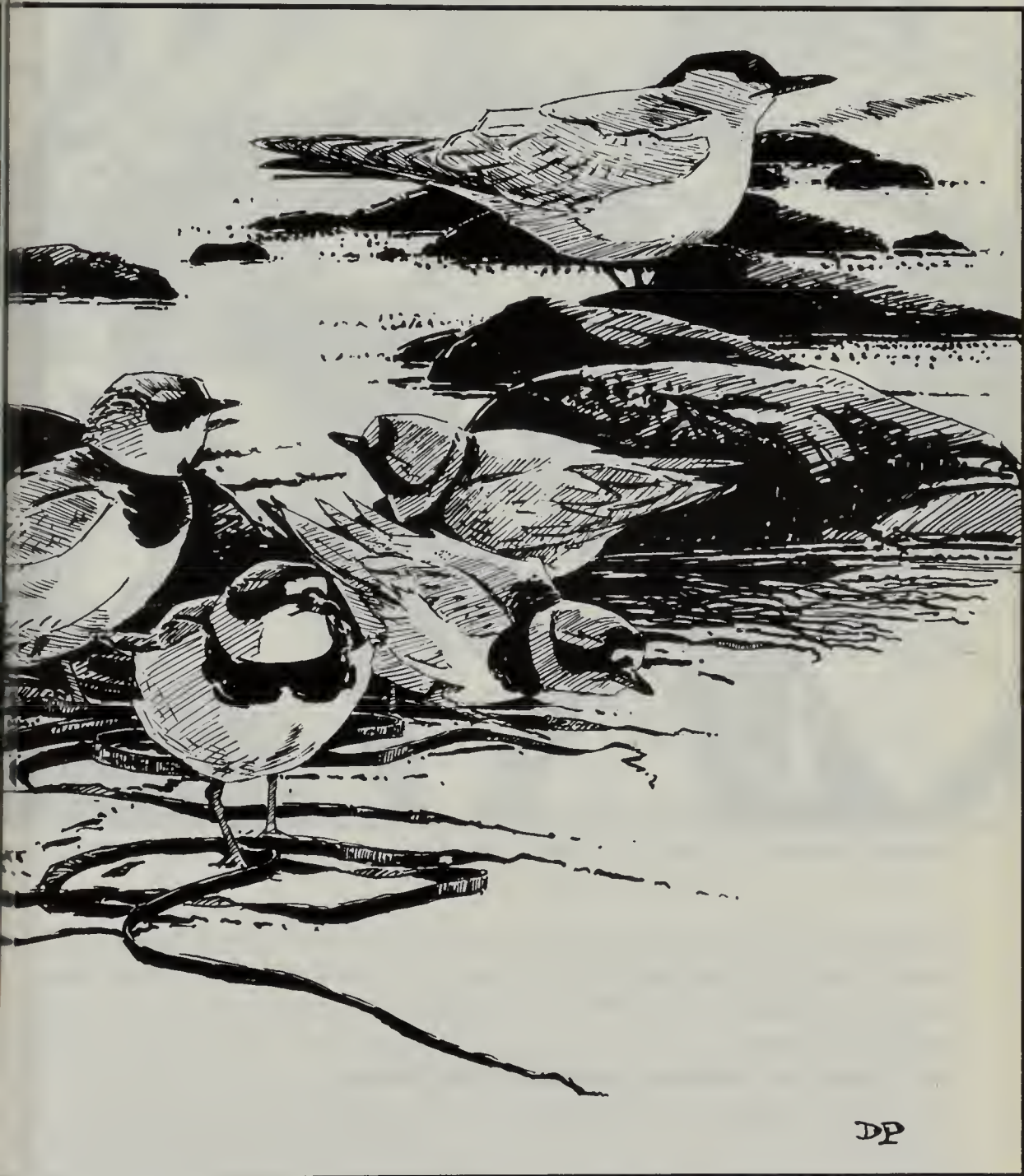
of The Richard Richardson Award, presented annually to the leading artist aged 21 or under. The winner this year was:

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD

1st Peter M. Leonard (Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey)

Runners-up: Max Andrews (Bath, Avon) and Joanne Karen Smith (Tilston, Cheshire) were rated equally.

In memory of his late wife, Pauline J. Cook, David Cook annually funds The PJC Award, presented to the artist whose single drawing especially appeals to the judges. This allows us to select an outstanding drawing which may not have been appropriate for another prize (it may, for instance, have



Great Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* and Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* (Dan Powell)



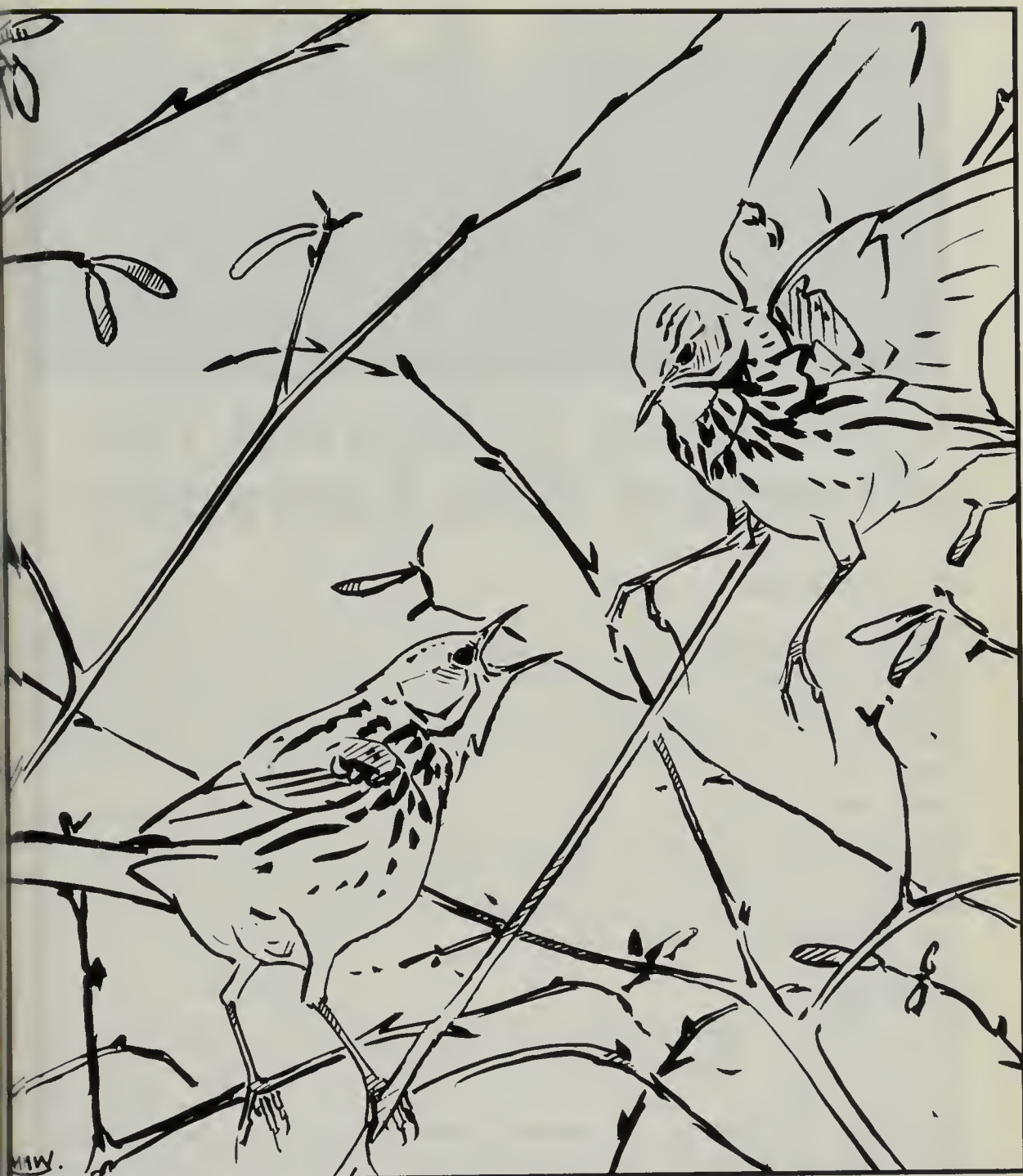
Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* and teasels *Dipsacus fullonum*, Queen Mary Gravel-pits
(Peter M. Leonard)

been part of an excellent set let down by one 'dud' drawing). In its own right, however, the drawing selected for The PJC Award will have been greatly admired by all four judges. This year's winner was:

THE PJC AWARD

1st John M. Walters (Buckfastleigh, Devon)

In this particular case, the judges considered that the very open style of drawing did not make a sufficiently bold cover design (the use for which the largest drawings are intended), but they did much admire the very free, expressive 'feel' to John M. Walters's sketch of Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*.



THE PJC AWARD WINNER: Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* at pre-roost site in a birch *Betula* tree, Yarner Wood, February 1993 (John M. Walters)

The nine drawings reproduced here (including the winner's cover design, which will be repeated as the frontispiece to this volume) give a flavour of the 180 illustrations assessed by the judges, and a further ten will appear as cover designs during the next 12 months. The judges have also selected a total of 74 drawings by 41 artists for display at the Society of Wildlife Artists' Exhibition at The Mall Galleries in London during 29th July to 13th August 1993. This annual event is well worth a visit.

J. T. R. SHARROCK, ROBERT GILLMOR, ALAN HARRIS and
KEITH SHACKLETON



Colonisation by Bearded Tits of Leighton Moss, Lancashire

John Wilson

The last published survey of the British breeding population of Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* (O'Sullivan 1976) described the spread of the population up to 1974 from its former restricted breeding area in East Anglia to areas along the South Coast and into Humberside. At that time, a small population had been established for only two years in north Lancashire, and presented the opportunity to study the expansion of range to this isolated reedbed. This paper details the colonisation, and subsequent build-up and fluctuations of the breeding population of Bearded Tits, from 1973 to 1992. It also describes the breeding and eruptive behaviour observed in the 19 years since successful colonisation occurred.

Study area

The study area comprised the 134.5-ha RSPB reserve of Leighton Moss in north Lancashire. Bearded Tits were confined to the 79-ha reedbed. The reedbed is almost pure common reed *Phragmites australis*, with fringing areas of yellow flag *Iris pseudacorus* and reedmace *Typha latifolia*, and small clumps of goat willow *Salix caprea* in the drier areas and along the dry edge. The reed areas are usually wet, with 10-20 cm of standing water in most parts in spring.

Methods

The Bearded Tit is a difficult species to census, and wet reedbeds also pose considerable difficulties: access may be tricky and the habitat can be physically damaged by trampling. Additionally, because of the risks of disturbing rare breeding species, such as Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*, and, from 1987, Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, access had to be restricted mainly to paths. Bearded Tits do not sing, and are not territorial. Males often assemble in small groups in spring, and there are several records of three individuals feeding at one nest. Conventional census methods, using either the Common Birds Census or point counts, are therefore difficult to apply. At Leighton Moss, an

annual census was carried out by mapping presumed pairs from sightings and observed nesting behaviour during the period from nest-building to feeding of young.

For the five years 1975-79, ringing of the population with BTO rings was carried out using mist-nets. Ringing was undertaken in 1975 and 1976 as part of a population study of reedbed birds, and was usually carried out, weather permitting, on three early mornings weekly from late May to late August and on two mornings weekly from September to November. Mist-netting was restricted to four separate locations within the 79-ha reedbed. These covered the main juvenile assembly areas, to which some adults, especially males, were also attracted. During 1977-79, netting was carried out mainly to obtain faecal material for a study of the diet of Bearded Tits (Bibby 1981). Catching was restricted in 1977 and 1978 mainly to two areas, both juvenile assembly areas; in 1979, it was further restricted to one area only, and visits were usually only once or twice a week. Ringing was resumed in 1992 as part of a national census of Bearded Tits, but was restricted to three mainly juvenile assembly areas.

Observations on nesting behaviour were made during census work. Over 60 nest sites were located, mainly by watching from a distance the adults carrying food to the nest. Because of the risk of disturbance or destruction, only 15 sites were examined closely. Early-morning observations on eruptive behaviour were made over the years, mainly from the reserve's path network and hides. Observations were most intensive during the period of the ringing study, with much of the reedbed covered during this period.

Results

Bearded Tits were first recorded at Leighton Moss on 5th November 1965, when a party of five appeared. They were recorded throughout that winter, but there were no sightings after 15th March 1966. The next sighting was not until 13th November 1971, when, once again, five were recorded; some of these remained throughout the winter, and two were present throughout the following spring and summer, but both were females, and no breeding took place that year. Four were seen on 24th October 1972, and ten on 12th November, with four still present on 20th March 1973. Despite intensive

Table 1. Estimated breeding population of Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* at Leighton Moss, Lancashire, 1973-92, and numbers of adults ringed or retrapped, 1975-78 and 1992

M = male; F = female

Year	No. of pairs	No. ringed		Year	No. of pairs	No. ringed	
		M	F			M	F
1973	1			1983	35		
1974	3			1984	35		
1975	6	5	2	1985	35		
1976	16	14	8	1986	15		
1977	30	21	12	1987	12		
1978	30	13	10	1988	15		
1979	20			1989	25		
1980	40			1990	28		
1981	40			1991	30		
1982	25			1992	35	25	18

searching, only one pair could be located later. Breeding was proved when a recently fledged young was seen with one adult on 17th May 1973. Two more successful nests were located later that season, the timing and location of the nests suggesting that all three broods were reared by one pair. Small parties of young were seen during the summer of 1973, and the largest flock recorded that year was one of 11 in mid October.

Table 1 details the recorded changes in population following the colonisation in 1973. It took four years for the population to reach 30 pairs (an initial annual population increase of 233%), and the maximum recorded population of 40 pairs was reached seven years after the initial colonisation. The declines noted in 1979, 1982 and 1986 all followed periods of cold weather in the preceding winter. Prolonged cold spells rarely produce heavy snowfall at Leighton, because of its proximity to the mild West Coast, the only heavy snowfall during the period being in December 1981, when 12 cm fell; fortunately this soon melted.

Details of the adults caught during the period of ringing studies are given in table 1. In 1975, five males of an estimated population of six were caught, and 14 out of 16 males in 1976. In all years, more adult males than females were retrapped. Observation suggested that males were drawn into the juvenile flocks, where the ringing effort was concentrated, much more than were the females.

All the 60 nest sites were located in the thicker areas of pure reed, with the nest built into the top reed litter, usually less than 30 cm above the ground level or water level. As already noted, in normal springs, virtually all the reedbed is wet, with 10-20 cm of standing water. The densest reed litter occurred, however, in the sections with shallower water, and Bearded Tits showed a marked preference for such areas.

Fledged juveniles were seen as early as 14th April. Incubation takes 12-13 days, and fledging only 9-12 days (Witherby *et al.* 1941), suggesting that laying can start as early as 15th March. Most first-brood young appeared in May, with first eggs being laid in early to mid April.

Table 2 shows the month of first ringing of juveniles from 1975 to 1978 and in 1992. Those caught in May and June were from first broods, with the second brood appearing in late June and July. The low numbers caught in August and September suggest that very few third broods were produced at Leighton. Flocking of juveniles took place in late May in an early spring, or early June in a late spring. At Leighton, such flocks often gathered in the

Table 2. Numbers of juvenile Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* ringed in each month at Leighton Moss, Lancashire, 1975-78 and 1992

Year	MONTH OF RINGING					
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
1975		6			2	1
1976		52	21	6	3	
1977	7	50	57		1	
1978	38	21	7		10	1
1992		11	74	13		
Totals	45	110	159	19	16	2

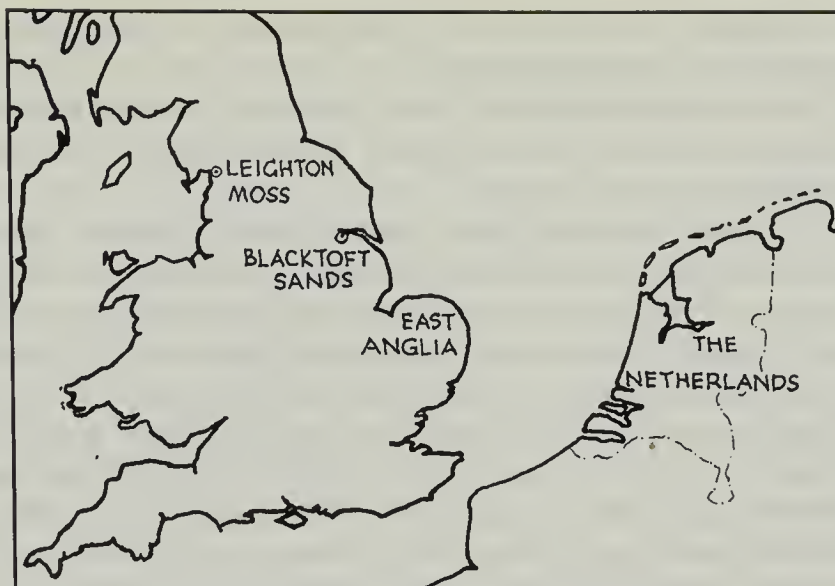


Fig. 1. Locations of main sites mentioned in text
Scale approximately 1 cm = 125 km

small areas of dead reed left after spraying with the herbicide *Dalapon* (as part of a programme to control reed encroachment). They also often frequented the willows along the central footpath or causeway which crosses the reserve. The largest numbers occurred on calm early mornings and usually dispersed by mid morning, often reassembling on still evenings. They usually called excitedly and, on occasions, made flights of up to 200-300 m, just above the old reed tops. Only occasionally were adults seen in these groups. This behaviour lasted throughout June and July, with later broods joining the flocks. Ringing revealed that many young remained in the flock until the onset of moult. By early August, the groups had dispersed, and there was a quiet period when birds were moulting and became extremely difficult to locate or to mist-net.

Some renewal of activity usually became evident at the end of August, with calling from the reed tops or willows, and flocking of those newly moulted, now in adult plumage. The activity and flock size increased throughout September. At first, behaviour then was very similar to the activity recorded in June, but by the second or third week in September they regularly started their 'high flying' activity (Pearson 1975). Bearded Tits regularly took off in groups, rising to perhaps 200 m on occasions, gradually spiralling up and calling all the time. Many flocks rose to only about 30 m and then quickly plunged back to the reedbeds, calling excitedly and moving quickly through the reed tops before taking off again. Other flocks stayed in flight high above the reedbeds for up to four or five minutes. The high flying and associated activity reached a peak around 09.00 to 10.00 BST, then gradually declined, and usually ceased by 11.00. Such activity was usually restricted to calm or nearly calm sunny mornings. This eruptive behaviour usually reached a peak in late September and continued into October. The greatest activity was recorded after a succession of calm, settled early mornings. Every flock observed has always remained above the Leighton reedbed and eventually returned to the reeds, but that they do leave in at least some years is confirmed by the recoveries of those ringed in spring or summer at Leighton and reported at Bolton, Lancashire, in October and March and (four) in South

Yorkshire in January, all except one in the autumn or winter following ringing; the exception was in its fourth year.

Eruptive behaviour as described above has been recorded in every year since colonisation, although there is proof from ringing of movement away from the reedbed in only two years.

During the period from mid September to late November, Bearded Tits regularly fed in groups, usually of from five to 20 individuals, on the limestone paths at Leighton. They moved out of the reeds to alight on the path, starting close to the reed edge, but, if not disturbed, they spread into the centre of the path up to 2 m from the reed edge. This activity appears to be associated with the eruptive behaviour described above; indeed, flocks which have been watched calling excitedly and taking part in high flying will gradually move from this activity to feeding on the paths. The path-feeding activity occurs during the same period as the eruptive behaviour, and, like the eruptive behaviour, gradually tails off in November, with smaller numbers as the month progresses. When on the paths, the flocks feed avidly, pecking at something small. What they are taking has never been identified positively, but it has been assumed that they are taking reed seeds, which certainly fall during this period; it has also been suggested that they may be picking up grit, which they need at that time of year as they change from the soft insect food of summer to the hard reed-seed diet of autumn and winter. I can trace no published record of such behaviour, although it does occur also at Blacktoft Sands, South Humberside, in some years (A. Grieve *in litt.*).

Discussion

The census methods used were not ideal, the greatest difficulty occurring in the favoured, drier areas, where several pairs were nesting in close proximity and small groups of up to five adult birds could be seen together, especially in early April. The limits on access in some areas of the reedbed also undoubtedly led to some birds being missed, especially from 1987 onwards, following the colonisation of the reedbed by Marsh Harriers. Thus, the numbers are considered to be accurate enough only to round down to the nearest five pairs in a year. The census methods were, however, applied consistently over the period, so should provide comparable results from year to year.

The ringing gave some check on the accuracy of the mapping census, but, partly because it was not primarily aimed at assessing population levels and was restricted to only two to four areas, was also certainly subject to some bias. The first two years, when the ringing effort was more widespread, produced a good fit with the census results, especially for males. Some adults in the areas of reed remote from the ringing sites were probably missed. The ringing effort was evidently extremely successful in catching juveniles, for no unringed adult birds were caught during the four years 1976-79.

The origin of the Bearded Tits which colonised the Leighton reedbed is not known as none was ringed. Their arrival in the period late October to early November is, however, in keeping with the eruptive behaviour recorded elsewhere (Axell 1966; Pearson 1975; O'Sullivan 1976). October is the major month of movement by this species both in East Anglia (Axell 1966) and at Leighton. It could be assumed that the most likely site of origin would be the

nearest breeding colonies at that time, which were 130 km southeast at Blacktoft Sands and the Humber reedbeds. Equally possible is that they came from either the East Anglian population or the Dutch population (see fig. 1). The latter possibility is supported by a ringing recovery in January 1966 at Marton Mere, near Blackpool (25 km south of Leighton), of a juvenile female ringed at Veluwemeer Nord IJsselmeer in the Netherlands five months earlier.

The Leighton Moss population has fluctuated, with declines occurring in 1979, 1982 and 1986 following severe winters with some snow cover. The decline from 1981 to 1982 was about 37%, while the decline from 1985 to 1986 was 57%. Heavy snow, which lays the reed and prevents the birds gaining access to reed seeds, the main winter food, has caused severe declines in other areas (O'Sullivan 1976).

The successful colonisation of this isolated reedbed is a good example of the value to the species of its eruptive behaviour leading to dispersal and establishment in new areas. The habitat at Leighton is obviously suitable and the wetter, cooler weather of the Northwest has not inhibited breeding. The highest population at Leighton Moss was the 40 pairs recorded in 1980 and 1981. This gave a density in the reedbed area of 0.51 pairs per ha. In the 108-ha tidal reedbed at Blacktoft Sands RSPB reserve, the density in years of high population was 0.9 pairs per ha (A. Grieve *in litt.*). At Titchwell RSPB reserve in North Norfolk, the density, again in a good year, in the freshwater reedbed was 1.5 pairs in 10 ha (N. Sills *in litt.*).

The Leighton reedbed is the wettest of the three reedbeds for which density estimates are available, suggesting that Bearded Tits do prefer the drier sites, a preference observed at Leighton, where the drier areas held the bulk of the population. This preference may be partly because the thicker reed litter in such drier areas provides more nest sites than the wet areas. Another factor is that the Leighton population appears rarely to produce a third brood. Possibly the cooler, more maritime climate at Leighton, which allows an earlier start to the breeding season, produces a lower food supply later in the season when third broods would be in the nest. Third broods are regular at both Blacktoft and Titchwell, especially in warm dry summers (A. Grieve *in litt.*; N Sills *in litt.*). The Leighton Moss reedbed remains the species' only breeding site in the Northwest, presumably because all other reedbeds in the area are too small.

It has been surmised that eruptive behaviour is a response to high population levels of this species (Axell 1966) or to its dependence on the seed of a single plant species (see Bibby 1983). At Leighton, the eruptive behaviour of excited activity and high flying has occurred each year. Even in the first year, when the population was under 20 individuals, such behaviour was noted, which does not appear to support the view that eruptive behaviour is a response to high population levels. It is difficult to compare years to test if the intensity and numbers involved in eruptive behaviour vary with population levels, since, as detailed above, weather plays such an important part in the scale and intensity of eruptive behaviour. It should be remembered, however, that the Leighton population is presumed to have originated from birds which had dispersed by eruptive behaviour, and so would be more likely to exhibit such behaviour than does the long-established East Anglian population, an element of which may be sedentary.

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank Dr John Day, Glen Tyler and Norman Sills for commenting on earlier drafts of this paper.

Summary

The reedbed at Leighton Moss, Lancashire, was colonised by Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* in 1973, and the population subsequently built up to a maximum of 40 pairs. The hypothesis that eruptive behaviour is a response to high population levels is questioned.

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John Wilson, Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve, Myers Farm, Silverdale, Carnforth,
 Lancashire LA5 0SW



Twenty-five years ago...

A White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Dungeness, Kent, on 5th August 1968 was the first of an unprecedented run of 25 during August-November.

On the next day, 6th August 1968, single Nutcrackers *Nucifraga caryocatactes* at Trunch and Ditchingham, both Norfolk, were the first in what was to become the largest-ever irruption, involving at least 315 individuals (*Brit. Birds* 63: 353-373).

On the night of 29th/30th August 1968, 585 warblers died by colliding with the lighthouse lantern on Bardsey (*Brit. Birds* 61: 535). This event triggered research, financed by the RSPB, to find ways to reduce such losses.

Daurian Redstart in Scotland: captive origin and the British List



Alan G. Knox, on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

On 29th April 1988, while carrying out a weekly count of Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima* on the Isle of May, Fife, Marc Jones found a male redstart *Phoenicurus* feeding on the turf near the Low Light. As it flew off, he noticed a large amount of white in the wings (Jones 1988).

MJ dictated a quick description into his pocket tape recorder and resumed his eider-counting. When he later returned to the NCC accommodation on the island, he told Dr Michael P. Harris, Robert Proctor and, later, Keith Brockie. No-one else saw the redstart that day. In the absence of suitable literature, the general opinion was that the bird had probably been one of the Mediterranean or Asian races of the Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus*. MPH and Dr Sarah Wanless may have seen the same bird on the island on 23rd March but, at the time, they, too, had assumed that it was a Common Redstart of one of the eastern races.

The following morning, 30th April, MJ relocated the redstart some 200 m from the original site, where he and KB were then able to watch it for several minutes.

At approximately 14.00 BST on the same afternoon, MJ once again saw the redstart feeding on the turf in the same area. He called RP over, but the bird ran down a rabbit burrow before he arrived. When KB joined them a few minutes later, the bird was still out of sight. The bird was removed from the burrow, but later died.

KB took the corpse with him when he left the island that afternoon and telephoned the next day to say that it was possibly a Daurian Redstart *P. auroreus*. This was later confirmed when KB and Bernie Zonfrillo compared the

specimen with skins at the Royal Museum of Scotland. A painting of the bird has been published (Brockie 1990) and is also reproduced here (fig. 1, page 365). The unfortunate individual has been further immortalised as a skin at the RMS (plate 118), and in ornithological folklore as the 'Daurian Deadstart'.

Description (based on notes by MJ and RP)

Size and structure Similar in size and shape to Common Redstart.

Plumage General appearance of upperparts noticeably darker than that of Common Redstart. Back and wings almost black, contrasting vividly with brilliant white wing patches. Crown, nape and mantle slate-grey as on Common Redstart, but lacking white forehead of that species. Throat and 'cheeks' black. Breast, belly, flanks and remainder of underparts to undertail-coverts deep brick-red (MJ) or cinnamon, slightly darker than tail (RP). Tail pattern obvious in flight: central tail feathers very dark, almost or completely black, contrasting with red (MJ), or deep orange, slightly darker than on Common Redstart (RP), outer tail feathers.

Bare parts Legs, bill and eyes black.

Identification

The identification as a male Daurian Redstart was accepted on a single circulation around the British Birds Rarities Committee, and the record was passed to the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, which examines all claimed 'firsts'. The BOURC also accepted the identification without any hesitation, but the question of origin remained.

Ectoparasite examination

When KB and BZ had opened the box in which the specimen had been brought to the RMS, a flea had fallen from the bird's plumage. An unusual species of flea might have provided evidence suggestive of vagrancy. This particular flea, however, was identified as a male *Ceratophyllus hirundinus*, which, as its name implies, is usually found on hirundines.

Racial identification

Vaurie (1959) listed two races of Daurian Redstart: nominate *auroreus* breeding from south-central Siberia to Ussuriland and Korea, and *leucopterus*, which breeds in central China and southeast Tibet. The former is migratory and winters south to south China, Hainan and Taiwan. *P. a. leucopterus* has a shorter migration and winters south to north Thailand and Vietnam. (See also Neufeldt & Vietinghoff-Scheel, 1983.)

Compared with males of the nominate race, males of the southern race *leucopterus* have darker rufous plumage on the underparts and blacker upperparts. The crown and nape are darker and greyer than on the nominate form (Vaurie 1959; see also Birkhead 1937).

The skin of the Isle of May bird was borrowed by the BOURC from the RMS and taken to the Natural History Museum at Tring for critical examination. Part of the tail was missing, including the right-hand central feather. This is shown as present in the KB painting and was presumably lost subsequently, perhaps during skinning. The weight of the bird is given in the KB painting (fig. 1, page 365) as 14.7 g, but the label notes 7.6 g.

Skins of the two races at the Natural History Museum had not been



116. Daurian Redstart
Phoenicurus aureus. Isle of
May, Scotland, 29th-30th
April 1988. Specimen in
the flesh (*B. Zonfrillo*)

completely separated. In particular, migrants of the nominate race were mixed in with specimens of the more southerly *leucopterus*. Once the birds which had been collected during the breeding season were sorted into groups from different geographic areas, the races were seen to be quite distinct. By comparison with other spring males, the Isle of May bird was attributable to the race *leucopterus*. The crown and nape were dark grey-brown, contrasting little with the back and mantle. The primaries, secondaries and the central tail feather were almost black. Those from the Amur and Transbaikalian area (nominate *aureus*) had pale crown and nape contrasting markedly with the back and mantle, and had much browner wing and central tail feathers. The colour of the underparts of the Scottish bird matched *leucopterus* better, although some nominate specimens were as rich. The Scottish specimen had narrow brown edges to the feathers of the upperparts, narrower than those found on the nominate race.

117. Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*, Isle of May, Scotland, 29th-30th April 1988. Tip of right wing showing broken tips to feathers (A. G. Knox)

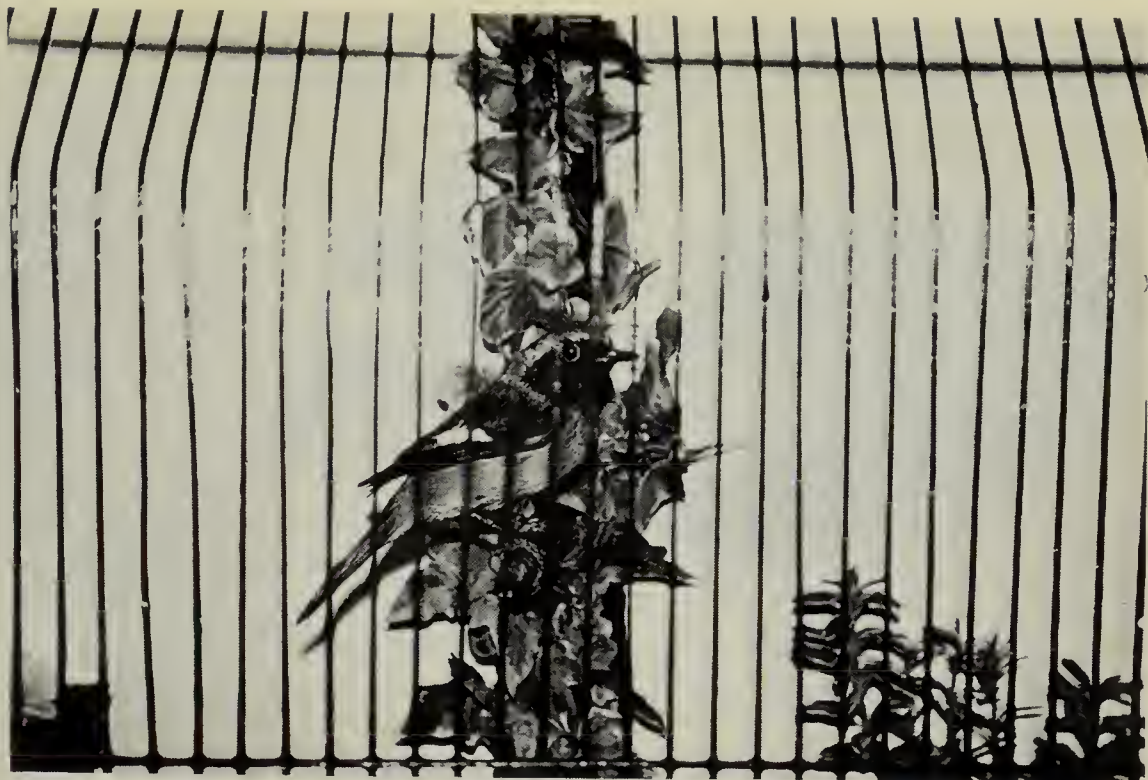


118. Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*, Isle of May, Scotland, 29th-30th April 1988. Skin, now at the Royal Museum of Scotland (A. G. Knox)

Plumage condition

The plumage of the bird was fresh and in quite good condition, sufficiently fresh to suggest that the bird was an adult. While most of the plumage was good, some individual feathers were, however, significantly damaged.

At least two of the tail feathers had notches near the tip. The other tail feathers were in very good condition. None of the museum skins showed similar notches on otherwise fresh tail feathers. On both wings, the two longest primaries had broken tips (plate 117). As can be seen in the photograph, the barbs extended beyond the end of the shafts. These tips were broken, not worn. Again, although a few skins at Tring showed primaries with damaged tips, this (a) was infrequent, (b) tended to be a shorter length broken off, and (c) was confined to only one feather: never this amount of damage to the two longest feathers and never on both wings. The other primaries and secondaries on the Isle of May bird showed very little wear. The birds at Tring with damaged primary tips were generally in a more worn state, with



119. Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*, National Cage and Aviary Birds Exhibition, Birmingham, December 1992 (D. T. Parkin)

more even wear on all the wing and tail feathers. Interestingly, the nominate birds (longer-distance migrants) were on average fairly heavily abraded, in contrast to the less-damaged plumage on most of the (less-migratory) *leucopterus*. The wear of the specimen from the Isle of May generally matched *leucopterus* better.

Escape likelihood

Wheeler (1988) has already pointed out that Daurian Redstarts were on sale in Britain between at least July and November 1987, at prices ranging from £65 to £85 each, contrary to the editorial which accompanied Jones (1988). Indeed, the species has been available regularly since the mid 1980s following the opening of a market in a considerable number of Chinese species. Although not relevant to the Isle of May record, members of the BOURC saw a Daurian Redstart on show at the National Cage and Aviary Birds Exhibition at the NEC in December 1992 (plate 119).

Discussion

Over a decade ago, D. I. M. Wallace included Daurian Redstart in a list of eastern species that he predicted might one day reach Britain (Wallace 1980). As such, the Isle of May individual looked a likely candidate for Category A of the British List. The reality turned out to be quite different.

The identification of the Isle of May bird as belonging to the southern race proved crucial. The northern race *aureus* is a long-distance migrant breeding in an area from which a number of rare birds have made their way to the Western Palearctic. The more southerly *leucopterus* migrates shorter distances and breeds in an area which has, as yet, yielded no species for which there are accepted wild occurrences in the West. There is a flourishing trade in wild

birds from China, and most are believed to come from the southern part of the country rather than the north. Although *leucopterus* breeds in the south, *auroreus* migrates through and winters in this area, and a captive origin would need to be considered for records of either race. The condition of the Isle of May bird's plumage was also worrying. Whilst it was not as poor as that of many ex-captives, it still suggested a period behind wire. The flea, which has never been recorded within the breeding or wintering ranges of *leucopterus*, was probably not originally from the redstart.

The majority of long-distance passerine vagrants are first-year birds which occur in autumn, although there are some notable exceptions (e.g. Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*: BOURC 1991; Doherty 1992). The Records Committee has become increasingly concerned about spring records of very rare birds long distances from their known breeding ranges. There has recently been further evidence to suggest that many of these are probably not of wild origin. The Daurian Redstart not only occurred in spring, but, on 29th-30th April, was much earlier than might have been expected. If it had been present since 23rd March as claimed, this would have been even more surprising for a wild bird.

Considering all the available information, the Records Committee voted unanimously not to admit the Isle of May Daurian Redstart to any category of the British and Irish List (BOURC 1992).

What if . . . ?

If the Daurian Redstart had been seen only in the field and a normal written description was all that had been submitted, it is possible or even likely that the species would have been accepted. It would probably not have been possible to assign the bird to race and there would have been few precise details of plumage condition. The escape likelihood would then have been balanced against the likelihood of natural occurrence. Wallace's (1980) prediction of natural occurrence might have pushed the record towards Category A, but, given the numbers in captivity in western Europe and the time of year, it is likely that this individual would have ended up in Category D.

Most birders do not wish to see birds of known captive origin added to the British List. Furthermore, there is little to be gained from cluttering Category D with known or highly probable escaped cage-birds, although an argument could be made for keeping a separate list of such records. Category DI as currently defined is for species where there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a wild state (BOU 1992).

With the burgeoning trade in wild birds, the task of the Records Committee is becoming increasingly difficult. Some of the most unexpected species are now kept in captivity. Escaped cage-birds could come from this country or anywhere on the Continent. They do not all turn up in suburban gardens where they are readily dismissed. Some migrate in spring and autumn, as they would have done in their natural range, arriving on remote headlands after storms, or on Fair Isle, the Isles of Scilly or the Isle of May. Many freshly escaped cage-birds have immaculate plumage, and others live long enough to moult in the wild, thereby purging any tell-tale damaged feathers.



Fig. 1. Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*, Isle of May, Scotland, 29th-30th April 1988
(K. Brockie)

☑ The inclusion of fig. 1 in colour has been subsidised by a donation from Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd.

How to help the Records Committee

Despite pressures to be more relaxed, even with Category D, the BOURC is finding it necessary to look increasingly critically at every record submitted for consideration.

After identification has been satisfactorily determined, the Committee generally tries to balance the likelihood of escape against the likelihood of natural occurrence. The benefit of the doubt has usually been in favour of a wild origin, but a shift in the balance is now detectable. For the Records Committee properly to assess each record, it is important to have available as much information as possible (see Knox 1990).

For all major rarities, if the bird dies, or even just loses a single feather, this should be deposited in one of the national museums and the information noted with the record submission.

Photographs are always useful, particularly a series showing different views. Often, submissions are accompanied by a single copy of one of the photographer's less important 'duplicates'.

Photographs, however crisp, have their own limitations. Differences in lenses and filters, film, lighting, exposure, processing and other factors lead to substantial changes in the appearance of prints or slides. This can be seen to great effect in the two photographs of the 1990 Skokholm White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* which appeared in Betts (1990) or in illustrations of a Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* in Scilly in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 542-543, 568, plates 236, 239, 251 & 252). Attempting to determine tone or colour from these photographs would be impossible. Even these examples are good, however, compared with photographs received recently with a claim of a rare race, in which either the colour balance was seriously awry or the person holding the bird was very ill.

Photographers are urged to include a colour standard alongside any bird being photographed. This need be no more complicated than swatches with a range of colours from a household-paint colour chart. The same standard can then be used by a photographic studio to produce prints that closely match the original. If this is not feasible, then the standard (or a slice of it) can be kept with the photograph or slide for comparison.

Descriptions of birds should be as complete as possible, even including details that might seem irrelevant. Sometimes, apparently trivial observations have enabled the Records Committee to age or sex birds after comparison with museum specimens. Behaviour should be noted, as well as the routine description of plumage. Considerable attention is paid to what is omitted from descriptions as well as what they contain. Tape-recordings are useful and, for rare birds, copies should be lodged with the British Library of Wildlife Sounds (29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS).

The more information that accompanies each record, the more likely it is that the BOURC assessment will be appropriate. Specimens are not required for firsts for Britain, but this makes it essential that records are documented thoroughly. Indeed, even specimens may not be beyond question: consider the infamous 'Hastings Rarities' (Nicholson & Ferguson-Lees 1962) or, more recently, the Meinertzhagen collection at the Natural History Museum (Knox in press). In the case of the 'Deadstart', the availability of the specimen was central to the record being rejected. This is not always so. Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* recently moved from Category D to Category A after a specimen became available (BOURC 1993).

Assessment of the record as outlined here was carried out by the members of the BOU Records Committee. The BOURC would like to thank the observers, Bob McGowan at the RMS for the loan of the skin, the Natural History Museum for access to the collections and library at Tring, Teresa Howard at the Entomology Library at the NHM at South Kensington and Bernie Zonfrillo for additional information. Tim Inskipp, Peter Lansdown and Dr David Parkin commented on the manuscript.

Summary

Details are given of the occurrence of a Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus auroreus* on the Isle of May, Fife, in 1988. The bird, which died after being caught, was identified as belonging to the more southerly race *P. a. leucopterus*, which is less likely to occur naturally than the nominate race. The record was not accepted as being of a genuinely wild individual by the BOURC and the reasons are reviewed. Some of the consequences if the bird had not died are discussed, along with certain aspects of record assessment.

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★ **BOUGH BEECH NATURE RESERVE/RESERVOIR** about 4 miles south of the A25/A21 junction (with access from the B2042 or B2027; the information centre is to the north of the reservoir) on Sunday 8th August and 12th September.

★ **BEWL WATER** on the A21, just south of Lamberhurst in the Education Centre on Sunday 24th October.

★ **COLLEGE LAKE WILDLIFE CENTRE** near Tring, Herts, on the B488 (off the A41) close to Bulbourne. Saturday 31st July and 25th September.

★ **SLIMBRIDGE, GLOS** (off M5) Village Hall (on the left, halfway along village road into the W&WT). Saturday 31st July and 2nd October.

★ **DINTON PASTURES COUNTRY PARK** near Reading (M4, A329(M) Woodley turnoff) and then A329 to Winnersh and Winnersh Station (B3030) on Sunday 17th October in the Loddon Room.

★ **THE SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST** at Woods Mill, Henfield, W. Sussex (A2037) on Sunday 19th September. A NEW FACILITY has also been opened here — selling a selection of our binoculars (Phone: 0273 492630). **BEACHY HEAD** (next to Beachy Head Hotel off the A259) on Sunday 15th August.

★ **DURLSTON COUNTRY PARK** off the A351 near Swanage, Dorset. In the visitor centre on Sunday 12th September. A NEW FACILITY selling a selection of our binoculars has been opened here (0929 424443)

★ **THE KENT TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION** in the Tyland Barn, near Sandling, Maidstone (off A229, Bluebell Hill, going south), on Sunday 8th August and 26th September, 10.30 am to 4.00 pm.

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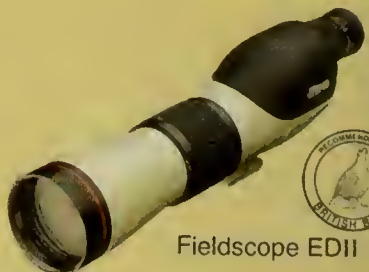
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Monthly marathon

The exotic perch of June's bird (plate 72) provided a clue, but the answers included a wide range of exotic species:

Grey Hypocolius <i>Hypocolius ampelinus</i>	(90%)
Desert Warbler <i>Sylvia nana</i>	(4%)
Bar-tailed Desert Lark <i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	(3%)
Thick-billed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus aedon</i>	(2%)

and a few votes each for Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin *Cercotrichis galactotes*, Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus*, Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulvus*, Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex* and Sinai Rosefinch *Carpodacus synoicus*.

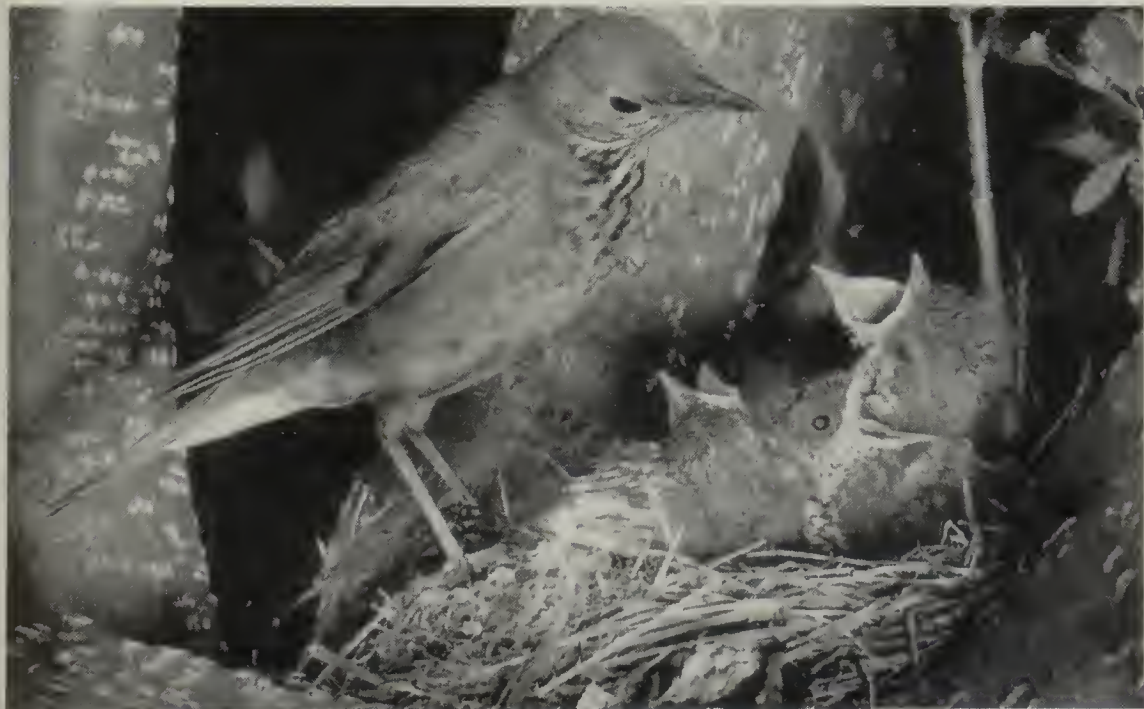
It was a Grey Hypocolius, photographed by Erik Hirschfeld in Bahrain in December 1990 (correct answers SCORE 10).

The scores in this 'Marathon' to date have been Wood Sandpiper 29, Leach's Storm-petrel 54, White-throated Robin 40 and Western Sandpiper 84 (not 86 as stated last month); with Grey Hypocolius 10, an all-correct score is now 217.

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120. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149); seventh stage: photo no. 86. Identify the species. Send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK41 3NJ, to arrive by 15th September 1993.



Notes

Young Common Swifts roosting in foliage of trees Within a restricted area of about 9 ha in Skurup, South Sweden (10 km from the south coast), I observed Common Swifts *Apus apus* roosting in the foliage of trees and on a lattice-work mast. The behaviour was concentrated in August, when Common Swifts migrate southwards in Sweden. A few observations (one in May, eight in June, and three in September) were made outside August.

During the Augusts of the 11 years 1982-92, I spent 244 evenings in the study area. On 75 evenings, swifts made fly-ins or perched; 48 swifts roosted in the foliage of trees of various kinds, and 23 swifts roosted on the mast. A total of 108 swifts, in addition to the ones which were seen roosting, made typical fly-ins towards trees or the mast.

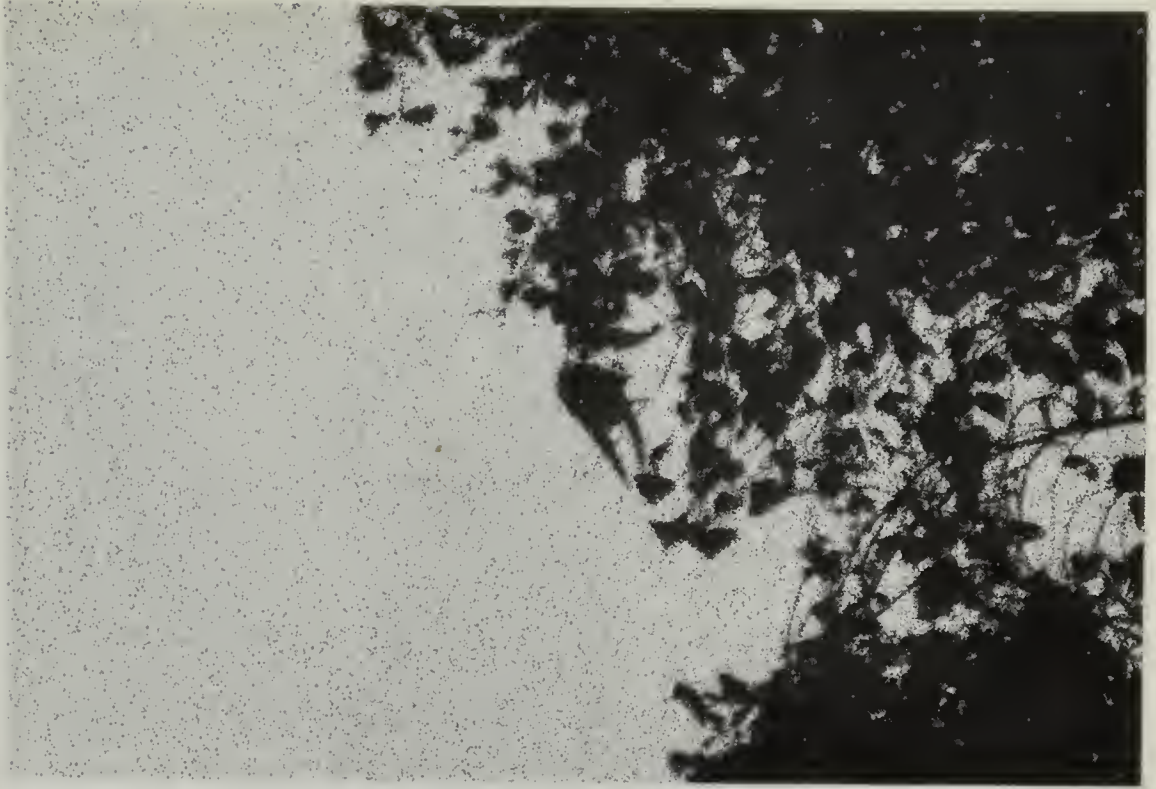
The swifts mostly had to make several (in some cases up to 20 or 30) fly-ins towards different trees or the mast before they succeeded in perching. They arrived and perched from 10 minutes to 40 minutes after sunset, earlier in cloudy weather and later in clear weather. In the morning, the swifts always left early if the weather was unfavourable, but in good weather they sometimes stayed until well after sunrise.

In trees, the swifts roosted by hanging from thin twigs or leaves on the outside of the foliage. Sometimes, the body rested on the foliage, so the bird's position was vertical. Often, the swift hung more freely, in some cases from just one leaf. Then, its position was more crooked, with the back almost downwards and with the wings pointing downwards (plate 121).

Newly fledged young Common Swifts can easily be recognised by their white 'face' and light fringes on flight and body feathers. When the swifts perched, it was mostly too dark to see those characters with certainty. Of the 71 roosting swifts, I could age 33 (46%), mostly through a telescope, in good light in the morning. All except one were newly fledged young birds.

The number of observations has varied considerably between different years. In 1992, roosting frequency was unusually high (26 swifts roosted in foliage or on the mast, 19 swifts made high fly-ins), which may have been due to high breeding success in good weather that summer over great areas. On many occasions, I have seen a tendency by the swifts to keep company. On three mornings in 1992, flocks of swifts (numbering about 30, 50, and 60) gathered near and over the study area soon after those roosting in foliage or on the mast had left their roost. A possible conclusion would be that all these swifts had spent the night in foliage or in similar situations.

In early years, I knew of only six similar observations mentioned by Lack (1956). Now I know of 34 observations in Europe (Britain nine, Denmark five, Finland four, Germany seven, Sweden five, Switzerland four). Lack hinted at



121. Juvenile Common Swift *Apus apus* roosting in birch *Betula*, southern Sweden, August 1988 (Erich Kaiser). After several fly-ins, the swift perched in this position at 19.50 hours on 20th August; the photograph was taken, with a long exposure, at 04.30 on 21st August; the bird's whitish 'face' could clearly be seen in the field; the swift departed at 04.35 hours

the possibility that roosting in foliage could be practised by Common Swifts coming from the northern parts of the species' range, where the most northerly populations regularly nest in holes excavated by woodpeckers (Picidae). The behaviour is easily overlooked, but methodical watching anywhere (such as the British east coast) where migrating Common Swifts concentrate could reveal interesting results: the first recorded observation of this behaviour was made in Scarborough (Gyngell 1897).

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LACK, D. 1956. *Swifts in a Tower*. London.

Short-toed Treecreepers roosting in tree crevice It is well known that treecreepers *Certhia* roost in hollows or crevices in trees, sometimes socially. In January 1992, I discovered such a roost site by observing droppings beneath the tree. Returning at night, during a hard frost, I photographed the four Short-toed Treecreepers *C. brachydactyla* roosting at a height of 3 m, the birds huddling together for warmth (plate 122).

HANS SCHOUTEN

Oosterstraat 21, 2022 CT Haarlem N, Netherlands



122. Short-toed Treecreepers *Certhia brachydactyla* roosting in tree crevice, Netherlands, January 1992 (Hans Schouten)

Simultaneous bigyny by Short-toed Treecreepers On 16th April 1991, near Quissac, southern France, we found ten eggs of the Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* in a nestbox sited in a mixed coppice of downy oak *Quercus pubescens* and holm oak *Q. ilex*. On several subsequent disturbances, two treecreepers always left, and soon after returned to, the box: evidently, two females were incubating the same eggs simultaneously. We regularly heard a male singing in the vicinity of the nest. On 7th May, the nest contained nine chicks two to three days old (one egg was infertile), with three adults feeding them. The nine fledglings left the nest on 21st May, when 17 days old: quite a normal brood-development pattern for this species (Isenmann *et al.* 1986). A case of simultaneous bigyny has been reported for the Eurasian Treecreeper *C. familiaris*, in which two females incubated 11 eggs that were later destroyed (Schönfeld 1983), while Harper (1986) reported successive bigamy by this species in England. Schwerdtfeger (1981) recorded two instances of bigyny out of 70 Eurasian Treecreeper clutches in Germany, though with the normal pattern of one male attending two females in separate holes, but he did not observe any case of bigyny among 30 broods of Short-toed Treecreepers studied. Our observation demonstrates that bigyny also occurs exceptionally among the latter species. There have been various and often contradictory statements on the causes of bigyny among birds (for overviews, see Wesolowski 1987; Searey & Yakusawa 1989), and it is therefore extremely difficult to determine the reasons which led two females to lay their clutches at the same time in the same nestbox.

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Le Crouzet, F-30770 Aumessas, France

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SEARCY, W. A., & YAKUSAWA, K. 1989. Alternative models of territorial polygyny in birds. *American Naturalist* 134: 323-343.
WESOLOWSKI, T. 1987. Polygyny in three temperate forest passerines (with a critical reevaluation of hypotheses for the evolution of polygyny). *Acta Ornithologica* 23: 273-302.

Apparent interruption of incubation by Eurasian Treecreeper In September 1990, 24 nestboxes for Eurasian Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* were set up in Wytham Wood, Oxford, as part of a behavioural study of this species. In April 1991, I found five pairs nesting in the boxes. After laying, all females incubated continuously apart from one, which interrupted incubation for at least four days. The normal incubation period of this species is 14-15 days, starting with the final egg (Flegg, 1973, *Bird Study* 20: 287-302). A delay of up to three days in the start of incubation after completion of the clutch has been reported by Swanberg (1982, *Vår Fågelvärld* 41: 23-24), but I know of no reports of incubation being interrupted once started. The female concerned

began laying on 22nd April and finished her clutch of five eggs on 26th. The nest was then checked regularly to make sure that she was incubating. I checked twice before 30th April, and the eggs were warm. On 3rd May, however, the eggs were cold, and they were also not being incubated on 4th and 6th; furthermore, the female was not seen in or around the nestbox. This suggests that incubation was interrupted for this period (although the female may have roosted inside the box). On 8th May, the female was found sitting again, and she continued until four eggs hatched on 16th. This break in incubation of four or five days led to an apparent incubation period of 20 days, much longer than the normal period for this species. Flegg (1973), however, recorded some Eurasian Treecreepers incubating for 20 days; breaks in incubation may explain these unusually long periods.

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Common Starling and Song Thrush using wet food to collect powdery food During 1991, in my garden at Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, I recorded an unusual feeding method by a Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. At any one time, there was only one individual behaving in the manner described below, and it always approached and left the garden in the same direction; I therefore believe that only one individual, referred to below as the 'subject starling', was involved.

Food was provided daily on two tables, one holding 'dry food' (mixed seed, commercial bird food, sunflower seed and ground peanuts) and the other 'wet food' (cat food, kitchen scraps, suet, and wholemeal bread soaked in milk or occasionally gravy). Initially, starlings came to the garden as soon as food was put out and a whistled signal given. They ate bread and milk first, with any adjacent scraps, and when this was finished fed on the other foods. When powdered peanuts were first offered, on 21st April, no starlings took this food, but on 28th April one (the subject starling) discovered that it could be gathered, although at much expense of time, and on subsequent days others followed suit. When, on 5th May, commercial bird food was provided alongside peanut powder, several starlings spent a lot of time gathering this energy-rich food. Then, on 11th May, the subject starling found that more powder could be gathered in less time by dipping wet bread into it. The starling landed on the dry-food table and, instead of pecking at the food, turned its head so that one eye faced the wet-food table, repeating this before flying to the latter table; there it rolled a large helping of wet bread with its beak into a 'sausage', some of which hung from its beak like a worm. It then flew back to the dry food and proceeded to dip the moist bread into the fine powder, using a side-to-side, slashing movement (similar to that used by thrushes *Turdus* to remove slime from worms) which coated both sides of the bread, before flying away carrying this food. After about 40 minutes, the behaviour was repeated. On its next visit to the garden, the subject starling went straight to the wet-food table, but on this occasion all the bread and milk had been taken by other starlings, so the cat food was gathered instead. This proved more difficult to dip in the side-to-side action, as it came apart; when some powdered food had been collected, the starling left.

This behaviour was not repeated until six days later, on 17th May, when the



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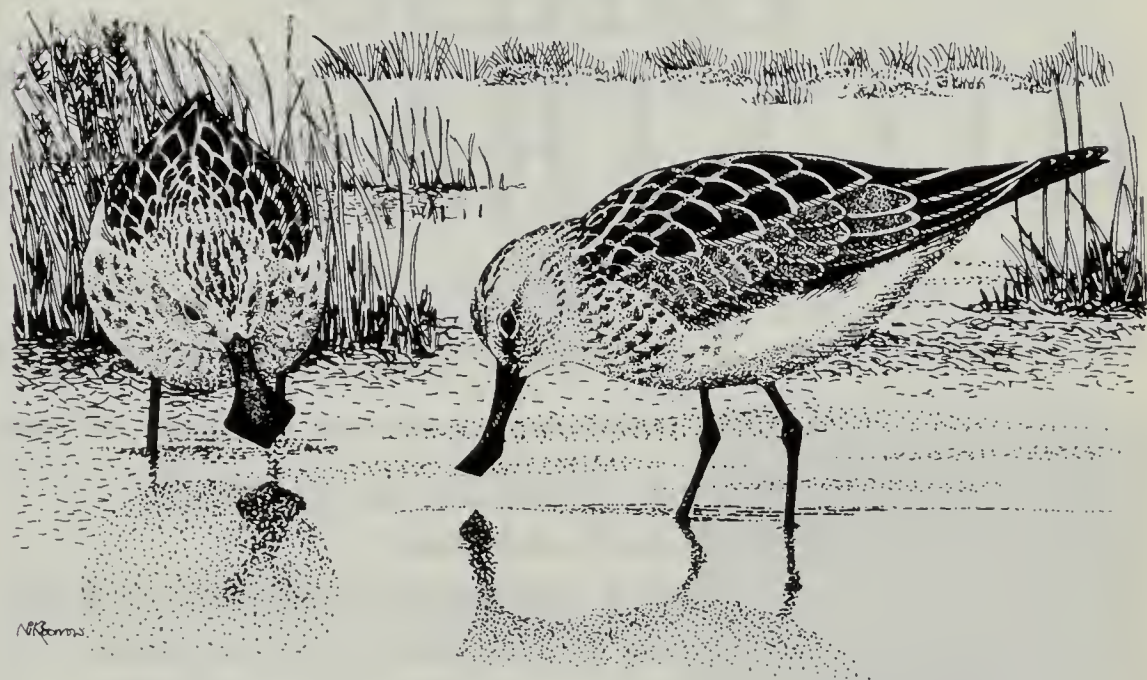
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starling went straight to the bread and milk, gathered a large beakful, flew to the powdered peanut and used the slashing movement to coat the bread. One other starling which had watched this also gathered a large beakful, in the form of a ball, which it took to the dry food but merely dipped into the powder in an up-and-down movement which coated only the end of the wet bread. Both sorts of coating behaviour were repeated throughout that afternoon, until all wet bread had gone (most was taken by other starlings, which did not use it to gather powdered food). The next day, the original behaviour was repeated, but the subject starling dropped most of the bread into the powdered peanuts; it attempted to pick it up, but succeeded only in covering it in peanut powder as the 'sausage' had disintegrated. It returned to collect more bread, with which it was more successful.

On 19th May, a Song Thrush *T. philomelos* also took advantage of this unexpectedly easy way to pick up peanut powder: it repeatedly picked up cat food and coated it in powder and other dry food.

Over the following days, I observed the subject starling repeat this behaviour several times. When it did so, others copied it, but using the less efficient method of dipping a ball of wet food rather than the side-to-side movement. On 28th May, fledgling Common Starlings were in the garden and being fed by parents; no use of wet bread was observed. When the subject starling arrived with a fledgling, however, it gathered wet bread as usual, with a part dangling, but the fledgling snatched the bread before it could be taken to the dry-food table. On 29th, a Song Thrush was again seen using cat food to gather dry commercial food, and the subject starling was still trying, unsuccessfully, to teach the behaviour to one of its offspring. As soon as the garden was overrun by young starlings, all the bread was used too swiftly to permit any 'clever' behaviour.

On 1st June, a remarkable development of the behaviour was observed. Following a shower of rain, the first for some time, a Song Thrush caught a worm on the lawn. Instead of immediately wiping and consuming this, it took it to the table with powdered food, where it used the side-to-side action to clean it, thereby coating the worm in food; as there are other suitable surfaces in the garden which the thrush could have used, I assume that it intended to gather the extra food.

J. J. WARNER

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Dr C. J. Feare has commented: 'From the date, and from the fact that the starling flew off with food in its beak, I conclude that the bird was gathering food for its nestlings. At this time of year, starlings not infrequently take different kinds of food in one beakful back to the nest and this is sometimes achieved by visiting different feeding areas in order to obtain different foods. From these points of view, the behaviour is therefore not unusual.

'Finely ground foods are difficult for starlings to procure. Indeed, I have recommended that farmers incorporate finely ground food into their cattle rations as a means of reducing starling damage (see Feare, 1984, *The Starling*, and references therein). The interesting part of this observation is that the starling appeared to learn, perhaps as a result of setting out with the intention of gathering two kinds of food for chicks, that more of the peanut powder could be procured after the bird had obtained a beakful of wet bread. The "subject starling" seems to have been using a bill-wiping movement in order to procure the peanut powder, although the other birds did not. I am not sure that this sort of mimicry of feeding behaviour has been recorded for Common Starlings before, although it has for other birds (e.g. Green Heron *Butorides virescens*). I have shown earlier (*Omni Scand.* 10: 42-47) that starlings do mimic their neighbour's behaviour when feeding in a flock. The mimicry observed here may be an extreme form of this.' EDS



Letters

A Pink-backed Pelican in Spain and the origin of recent European records On 4th August 1991, together with Brigitte Königstedt, we saw a pelican *Pelecanus* some 2 km SSE of Arguedas, near Tudela, Navarra, Spain. The bird was circling quite low over flooded basins at a distance of about 200 m in good light, at about 13.00 hours. The following description, made under excellent conditions for observation, leaves no doubt that the bird was a Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens*:

SIZE Large, but less huge than White Pelican *P. onocrotalus* or Dalmatian Pelican *P. crispus*; possibly one-quarter smaller. Appeared less heavy in flight than those species, generally more agile.

GENERAL APPEARANCE Typical pelican, with general coloration a pale, greyish white. Secondaries and, particularly, primaries darker. Initial impressions suggested juvenile or immature Dalmatian Pelican, but crest longer. Dark flight feathers contrasting with rest of wing, but without bold, stork-like black-and-white pattern of White Pelican.

COLORATION Body plumage generally greyish-white; upperparts somewhat darker than underparts, which pale, but not pure white. Upperwing showed dark black-brown primaries; secondaries similar, but paler. Greater coverts dirty grey, lighter than flight feathers, but rather darker than remainder of wing.

We assume this to have been an adult in worn breeding plumage. This accords with an August sighting and explains the absence of any pink tint (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Hollom *et al.* 1988; Madge 1991; Maclean 1988).

We believe this to be the first record of this species for the Iberian Peninsula. More significant, though, in our opinion, is the place of the record in the context of increasing reports of this species from different parts of Europe in the last few years. According to Cramp & Simmons (1977), this bird 'breeds much of Africa south of Sahara, Red Sea, north to about 23° N, and Madagascar' (see also Harrison 1983). The closest breeding sites to Spain are in Senegal and Gambia (Serle *et al.* 1977). Up to the publication of Cramp & Simmons (1977), the only records for the Western Palearctic were from Egypt and Israel; no European record existed.

The years 1989-90 saw a sudden increase in records, mostly reported in the journals *Limicola* and *Dutch Birding*, from different parts of Europe, including

Underwing with dark grey-black flight feathers, much darker than whitish flights of Dalmatian Pelican and lighter than on White Pelican (not black as on this species, nor so deep a black as in illustration 12 of plate 28 in Cramp & Simmons 1977). A pale band along greater coverts. Plumage essentially a mixture of characteristics of White and Dalmatian Pelicans.

Occipital crest distinct, in shape as White Pelican's, but shorter; lacked Dalmatian Pelican's curled, untidy head feathering. Bill pale yellowish-white, scarcely contrasting with head; pouch pale yellow. Bill without strong tones. Pale surrounds to dark eye, with dark patch before eye.

Characteristic dark 'ribbing' on pouch, visible at close range, not apparent at distance from which bird first observed. (This feature is not mentioned in several books.) Colour of feet not distinguishable, but clearly not so dark as on Dalmatian Pelican.

Austria, Denmark, England, France, the Netherlands and Poland, but especially from Germany, from both the south and the coastal strip. Although not all these records have yet been ratified by the respective rarities committees—the majority being still ‘unconfirmed’—a certain, albeit as yet ill-defined, trend is beginning, we feel, to emerge. Up to now these records have, without exception, been taken to refer to ‘escapes’, and their circumstances have thus eluded scrutiny. Records of other African species, such as the Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*, are treated similarly. This is, of course, due to the species’ frequency of occurrence in captivity—which, however, is no proof that *these* birds are of captive origin. Indeed, a bird with such strong powers of flight may even be expected to ‘come naturally to this continent, perhaps in the company of migrating storks *Ciconia*. We feel that this is a more probable explanation. The too-hasty dismissal of reports of certain species as referring to escapes can only bar the way to fuller understanding of the birds’ origins. We fully agree with the (FRG) German Rarities Committee (Bundesdeutscher Seltenheitausschuss 1991), which, in its report for 1989, explained the batch of sightings of this species during 1989-90 as an influx from Africa, not as an (unprecedented) exodus from captivity. The situation now demands unbiased scrutiny of all European records.

It follows, also, that we can now scarcely determine which records of pelicans from earlier years may have involved the Pink-backed Pelican. Many observers clearly did not even consider this species as a possible immigrant, or had had no experience of it—with the result that pelicans encountered in Europe have been matched with one or other of the two European species.

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Publication of this letter has been deferred until the authors’ record was endorsed by acceptance by the Iberian Rarities Committee, which was notified to us in February 1993 (Dr Eduardo de Juana *in litt.*). EDS

Use by birds of roads for navigation I was interested to read the note by Jacques Franchimont (*Brit. Birds* 86: 17) suggesting that Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were using roads as navigational cues as they moved to roost. He went on to describe how they were so low that they had to take rapid evasive action to avoid vehicles. I suggest that this makes it very unlikely that the road was being used as a navigational aid. It is much more likely that they were adopting an energy-efficient strategy. Road surfaces heat up during the day, especially if they are covered in tarmac.

Even unmetalled roads retain heat better than the surrounding area because of the compaction caused by traffic. This means that there will have been a linear area of heated, rising air which the Cattle Egrets would have been able to exploit. I have seen this species going to roost in three continents, and they characteristically fly low to roost and may be able to take advantage of other phenomena leading to locally rising air.

The case reported by Julian G. Greenwood (*Brit. Birds* 82: 117) of Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* does seem likely to be a case of the road being used as an immediate navigational cue. In this case the birds were travelling at a height of 150-200 m, which is probably too high for them to have been exploiting rising air. At this height, however, they would have had a very distant horizon and, since there is no high ground along the Bangor-to-Newtownards road, I suspect that the Sandwich Terns would have been able to see Belfast Lough as soon as they reached their flying height over Strangford Lough.

The usefulness of rising air for flying birds to save energy does, of course, depend on their size. Birds the size of a Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (or smaller) generate too much turbulence to be able to use the flap-flap-glide strategy in normal flight and they are not likely to gain benefit in this situation. Bigger birds, such as the Cattle Egrets, are able to gain an advantage and can be seen gaining height on extended wings in a prolonged glide as they cross an area of lift.

CHRIS MEAD

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Kingfisher apparently feeding on berries In connection with the note by G. Alexander on Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (*Brit. Birds* 85: 616), may I bring to your attention the following lines from Shelley:

'I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake,
Upon a drooping bough with night-shade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries
With thick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky—'

Prometheus Unbound

Act 3, Scene iv, 46-51

Shelley has been proved over the years to have been a remarkably acute observer and accurate recorder of natural phenomena and, although there is no indication of where or exactly when he witnessed the incident in the poem, it must, in my opinion, be beyond question that he did actually see what he described.

Until now, I have put it down as an unexplained curiosity, but perhaps, at long last, Mr Alexander's experience may throw some light upon those lines written in 1819.

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Mimicry by Chaffinches Kettle (1991) described a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* singing a song very like that of a Wood Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*. Although mimicry of other species' songs by Chaffinches is rare, there are previous documented examples of their incorporating elements typical of the

songs of other species, including: Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* (Bromley 1946), Hedge Acentor *Prunella modularis* (Hartley 1946), Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* (Conrads 1977; Helb *et al.* 1985), Wood Nuthatch (Conrads 1979), and Canary *Serinus canaria* (Slater 1983). In addition, Thorpe (1958) demonstrated in a tutoring experiment that young male Chaffinches might learn Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* song.

Helb *et al.* (1985) interpreted mixed singing by Chaffinches as being due to the lack of a conspecific model during the sensitive phase leading to 'a defect in normal song learning'. The sounds imitated are usually similar to those produced by conspecifics. Since songs are learnt, and are then produced in an extremely stereotypic fashion, these unusual songs can provide clues as to the way songs mutate as part of the process of cultural change.

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'Birds of the Western Palearctic'—a note of gratitude to contributors Preparation of the eighth and last volume of the Handbook (or 'BWP' as it is more affectionately known) is virtually complete, and publication is scheduled for 1994. The Editors would like to express their deep appreciation for the help and support generously given over many years by ornithologists and birdwatchers not only throughout Europe, but also in Russia (including beyond the Urals) and other republics of the former USSR, many countries in the Middle East, Africa, India and Pakistan, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and North America. Bringing this great project to fruition has been an immense privilege and pleasure, but we could not have done it without your help. Thank you very much.

BWP EDITORS

We should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all birdwatchers, to congratulate everyone involved in *BWP* for bringing this massive task to a successful conclusion. Apart from a very small, dedicated group of paid staff, the project has been carried out, as is traditional in ornithology, by large numbers of both amateurs and professionals, working in their own time and without expectation of reward. We thank them all, whether editors, authors, artists, contributors or advisers. EDS

Identification of female Pine Buntings

Colin Bradshaw and Martin Gray



Controversial birds are a double-edged sword for the British Birds Rarities Committee. They take up an inordinate amount of members' time and effort, but out of this frequently comes a clearer understanding of a complex problem. It is rather more frustrating if, after all the effort expended, we are only a little nearer the solution than when we started. Such is the situation with the 'Big Waters bunting', present in Tyne & Wear from 18th February to 16th March 1990. Was it a Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*, as originally claimed, a Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, perhaps of the less-yellow eastern race *erythrogenys*, or even a non-yellow Yellowhammer as others have maintained (and do genuinely non-yellow Yellowhammers really exist?), or was it perhaps even a hybrid between the two species?

On first circulation to the Committee, nine members voted to 'pend for more information' and one to reject on the grounds that female Pine Buntings are probably not identifiable in the field. Two subsequent claims of female Pine Bunting, from North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 12th-13th October and 1st-5th November 1991, were also 'pending'. When such an impasse occurs, the BBRC frequently enlists the help of outside experts, often from abroad (which helps to explain why some records of 'difficult' birds take a long time before a final decision is reached). On this occasion, we sought help from three bunting experts, two of whom opted for Pine Bunting (with detailed reasons why) and the third for Yellowhammer (without giving reasons). Following much discussion, and in the uncommon situation where 'present knowledge' was insufficient, the BBRC decided to 'go public' on this issue and to discover what other sources of information and opinion could be tapped by explaining the current position and various personal views.

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Big Waters bunting, 1990

This bird has appeared in words and photographs so many times over the past two years that there can be few who are unaware of its general appearance. Since it was at a feeding station for a month, thousands of birders were able to watch and photograph it at close range (plates 124 & 125). Initially, it was provisionally identified as a female Pine Bunting on the following characters:

- (i) it stood out from the Yellowhammers present in being noticeably pale, especially on the mantle, which was a cold, pale grey-brown;
- (ii) in the field, despite close and detailed scrutiny, it showed no visible yellow; all other plumage colours appeared normally saturated, making leucism less likely;
- (iii) the fringes of the primaries were a gleaming white, with no hint of yellow;
- (iv) a very prominent white submoustachial stripe curled behind the ear-coverts and joined a pale grey nape side;
- (v) the belly was white and unstreaked, extending as an inverted 'V' into the lower breast;
- (vi) the lesser coverts were a uniform grey-brown, with no hint of Yellowhammer's pale notching.

In addition, it showed several other features, many of which CB had noted on Pine Buntings in Siberia:

- (i) a prominent white eye-ring;
- (ii) a distinctly bicoloured bill, with dark upper and pale lower mandible;
- (iii) a whitish central nape spot bordered on each side by a short dark bar;
- (iv) a row of thin streaks on the white throat, with an isolated crescent of unmarked white below (see fig. 1);
- (v) the cap was pale grey, but so heavily and regularly streaked as to appear uniformly dark, and it never showed the pale central crown present on many Yellowhammers (and some Pine Buntings).

Controversy revolved around the general plumage tones of this individual. Why was it so cold and grey, with very little brown in the plumage? It seemed unlikely to be leucistic, as the rufous on the rump, tertials and lowest row of scapulars appeared normal. Admittedly, it did become marginally browner during its stay and some chestnut became visible in the streaking on the breast sides, but, given the limited information available in the literature, it seemed difficult to believe that a Pine Bunting could be this cold.



Fig. 1. Head pattern of presumed female Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*, Big Waters, Tyne & Wear, February/March 1990 (Martin Eccles). Note: prominent white submoustachial stripe, white eye-ring, bicoloured bill, row of thin streaks on white throat with isolated crescent of unmarked white below, heavily streaked crown with no pale central streak



FACING PAGE

123-127. Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos* and Yellowhammers *E. citrinella*

123. Top left, female Pine Bunting, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 1st November 1991 (*D. Patterson*)

124 & 125. Top right and upper centre, 'Big Waters bunting' (see text), with Yellowhammers in lower photograph, Tyne & Wear, February 1990 (*C. Bradshaw*)

126. Lower centre, putative hybrid between 'Big Waters bunting' of 1990 and Yellowhammer, with two Yellowhammers, Big Waters Reserve, Tyne & Wear, January 1991 (*C. Bradshaw*)

127. Bottom, male Pine Bunting with male Yellowhammer, Northumberland, February 1992 (*Eric Bird*)

In a subsequent article on identification of female Pine Buntings (*Birding World* 3: 89-90), Ian Lewington highlighted the following as being important features: the crown streaking; pattern of the malar stripe; relative absence of streaking on undertail-coverts; and the contrasting breast pattern, with blackish streaking in the centre fading to the sides. He concluded that the Big Waters bird was an abnormally pale Pine Bunting: a conclusion that many found difficult to believe, feeling that this was either a normal Pine Bunting or a very abnormal Yellowhammer.

Big Waters buntings, 1991

During January-February 1991, two unusual-looking buntings intermittently visited the feeding stations at the Big Waters Reserve. Both showed the same washed-out mantle coloration as the 1990 individual, but both had bright yellow primary edges and a pale yellow suffusion on the belly; one also had a yellow throat (plate 126), while the other had an intriguing yellow spot in the middle of the crown. Again, both looked quite unlike any of the Yellowhammers present and were immediately striking owing to their pale plumage.

The question then posed was: were these hybrids of the 1990 'Pine Bunting' with a Yellowhammer, or was there a 'non-yellow' gene in the local Yellowhammer population which manifested itself in these three birds in different ways?

Expert opinions

The BBRC sought advice on the identity of the three buntings, on the criteria useful in identifying female Pine Bunting, and on the identification of hybrids. We received detailed comments from Urban Olsson and Professor Eugeny Panov. Both thought that the original 1990 bunting was a female, that it was probably a first-winter, and that its coloration was within the normal range for Pine Bunting. UO pointed out that this coloration is due partly to broad pale fringes to the body and covert feathers obscuring the colours below (these were visible on the photographs which had been sent); as the fringes wore off,

the bird would become less cold, darker and brighter. EP stated that the coloration of female Pine Bunting is rather variable, particularly with regard to the following characters, all of which vary more or less independently:

- (i) light background to head, breast and belly plumage (varies from dull, dirty sandy to almost white);
- (ii) amount of dark markings on head and throat;
- (iii) amount of chestnut (feathers) on head and throat;
- (iv) colour of dark streaks on sides of upperparts;
- (v) amount of white on nape;
- (vi) general colour of mantle (which also tends to be slightly paler and duller in winter).

They differed in their opinions of the 1991 buntings. UO felt that these looked exactly as he would expect a hybrid to look, 'a sort of mosaic between mainly Pine Bunting-type pale plumage and then rather bright yellow colours in limited areas', but added that the only way to be sure would be through DNA analysis. EP felt that they were more likely to be first-year Yellowhammers with a limited amount of yellow, but that it was 'impossible to distinguish on phenotypical characters only between first-year Yellowhammer and first-year hybrids'. Both enlarged upon the question of hybrids (see below).

In contrast, Hadoram Shirihai consulted with colleagues in Israel, where both Pine Bunting and Yellowhammer winter. They came to the conclusion that the original 1990 bunting was a non-yellow Yellowhammer, but time and workload prevented HS from giving reasons.

Orkney buntings, 1991

In autumn 1991, MG, despite being on crutches, found two different female buntings on North Ronaldsay: on 12th-13th October, and on 1st-5th November. Both gave excellent views and were identified as female Pine Buntings, the second being aged as a first-winter (plate 123). The most immediate feature of both was their general cold, pale plumage, which MG likened to the effect of a Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* of the 'mealy' race *flammea* in a flock of the 'lesser' race *cabaret*. Neither was quite so cold as the 1990 Big Waters bunting, and both showed fairly obvious chestnut streaks on the breast sides (a very difficult feature to see on the Big Waters individual).

These appeared to be more typical Pine Buntings, but both records were 'pending' by the Committee while investigations were carried out into the identification features of the species. What was noticeable from the descriptions of all three buntings was the large degree of overlap in features that were noted as 'different'. It is from these areas of overlap that the list of potential separation features (see below) is drawn up.

Male Pine Buntings, 1992

In February 1992, two male Pine Buntings turned up in England: in Northumberland, and at Dagenham, Essex. Many observers commented on just how cold and grey were the mantles of both. The Northumberland individual could easily be picked out among the flock of mixed finches and

Yellowhammers by its mantle colour, which was markedly different from that of any of the accompanying Yellowhammers (plate 127) and was matched closely by some female House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. The similarity of mantle colour to that of some pale, fresh-plumaged House Sparrows was noted also by observers of the 1990 Big Waters bunting. Photographs of the Dagenham male suggest that it had a very similar mantle colour (*Brit. Birds* 85: plates 204 & 207).

Problems of hybrids and non-yellow Yellowhammers

Correspondence from both EP and UO made us realise that our views on the probable appearance of hybrids were extremely simplistic and that birds like the 'Sizewell bunting' (*Brit. Birds* 83: 240-242, plates 142 & 143) were the exception rather than the rule. We can do no better than to quote Urban Olsson in full:

'How hybrids can be separated is a much more difficult question to answer, since second-, third-, fourth- etc. generation offspring of hybrids must look increasingly like one of the ancestors as the genes of one species become diluted. Any type of intermediate plumage must be possible and to be expected, up to the stage where the plumage shows the characters of only one of the ancestors, but where there are still some genes left from the other species a particular individual does *not* look like. Clearly there could be cases where a trace of yellow could only be seen in the hand.

'I think we must admit to ourselves that this is a problem that can never be solved unless we actually analyse the genes. For all practical purposes I think we can accept a record of Pine Bunting if the bird in question shows all the characters of Pine Bunting and nothing contradicts that diagnosis such as is the case with the first bird [Big Waters, 1990]. I think it is most likely that a bird that looks just like a Pine Bunting actually is one, but I have no answer to how a true Yellowhammer without a trace of yellow in the plumage could be safely identified, if such a bird exists . . .'

Professor Eugeny Panov also wrote at length on hybrids and supplied colour sketches of head patterns (fig. 2, on page 384). He stated that 'some hybrids may be identified as such only by means of examination in the hand, although such specimens occur comparatively seldom. I once caught, in the overlap zone near Novosibirsk, a female *E. leucocephalos* whose mate was a typical male *E. citrinella*. This female appeared to be a hybrid: she had yellowish bases to the crown feathers concealed under their white end parts, and also a vague yellowish belt along the middle of the belly . . .'

There seems to be a somewhat greater problem with males. EP stated: 'In the sample of 239 adult hybrid males 58 specimens had a yellow tinge on a single, restricted, part of the plumage, namely on the wing in the region of the marginal underwing-coverts. I am not certain that this could be seen in the field . . .'

He went on to mention the possibility of a pure grey bird: 'i.e. grey without any tinge of brown or yellow does not occur in species-specific coloration of Pine Bunting or Yellowhammer but does very rarely in some obvious hybrids. I saw such aberrant coloration in adult male hybrids but never in females . . .'

Alan Dean has raised the question of what such male hybrids might look like in first-year plumage. It would seem unlikely that they show more yellow, but which later disappears as they attain adult plumage. If not, then such an immature could show virtually no yellow at some stage. (A. R. Dean *in litt.*)



Fig. 2. Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* and Pine Bunting \times Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* hybrids. *B* had a yellow tinge to primary fringes, and *C* had yellow primary fringes, both having other pale parts of plumage pure white; but note that such 'depigmented' hybrids may have no yellow at all, as in the case of *D* (redrawn by Martin Eccles from original colour sketches by E. Panov)

Separating Pine Bunting from Yellowhammer

Given all the preceding information, we feel that the following factors may help identify female Pine Bunting. No single feature by itself is enough, as the 'impression' of Pine Bunting is a composite of these features, but, equally, an absence of some of them would not necessarily go against the identification. We are sure, however, that the first three are essential, as also are prolonged and close views (or examination in the hand) and preferably some supporting photographs.

- (1) The bird must show no trace of yellow anywhere, hence the necessity for prolonged, close views (many species initially appear cold-toned, only to reveal some yellow or olive on close inspection: e.g. 'Siberian' Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*).
- (2) The edges of the primaries must be seen to be pure white. Occasionally, hybrids show their only obvious trace of yellow on these parts (see plate 126). The edges of the rectrices should be white or pale grey.
- (3) The ground colour of the underparts must be seen to be white or whitish, with no more than a grey, brown or creamy wash to throat and breast and becoming pure white on belly, vent and undertail-coverts. In addition, the streaked and unstreaked areas of the underparts should be quite discrete and create an inverted 'V' when viewed from in front.
- (4) The lesser coverts should be a rather uniform grey or grey-brown, with none of the pale notches shown by Yellowhammer. This feature can be very difficult to see, as the lesser coverts are usually hidden by the flank and scapular feathers.
- (5) The submoustachial stripe should be prominent, and white, off-white or pale grey.
- (6) There should be a pale nape spot bordered on each side by a dark bar, somewhat like a poorly marked female Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*.
- (7) The bill is often longer, though perhaps no deeper, than on Yellowhammer. Each of the three putative Pine Buntings had a distinctly bicoloured bill: dark grey upper mandible with paler cutting edge, and pale grey lower mandible. Some Yellowhammers' bills, however, can (though in our experience comparatively rarely) appear bicoloured.
- (8) All three showed white undertail-coverts with sparse, thin, dark shaft streaks. These are not a continuation of flank streaks, but appear *de novo* on the undertail-coverts.
- (9) Two of the three showed the feature described by Ian Lewington of a linear dotted pattern to the malar stripe, giving a composite prominent malar; this was not noted on the third, which was described as having well-defined malars. Each had a slight streaked extension from the malar, across the lower throat and isolating a white, unstreaked crescent below. We do not know whether Yellowhammer can show these features. (See fig. 1)
- (10) All three showed heavy, close, dark, linear streaks on the forehead and crown, almost running together into a striated pattern; the cap looked dark at a distance, and only with better views was this seen to be caused by this streaking on a pale or, on the Big Waters bird, almost white ground colour. This was also described by IL, since when, however, CB has seen first-year Yellowhammers showing the same feature, so it is not diagnostic of Pine Bunting (in addition, some female Pine Buntings show a pale area on the central crown).
- (11) Pine Buntings should show some rufous in the breast and flank streaks. This can range from very obvious, as on the first North Ronaldsay individual, to almost impossible to see except in good light. This feature, when shown by Yellowhammers, appears less distinct, perhaps owing to the different ground colour.
- (12) Pine Buntings are often up to 10% bigger than Yellowhammers. Both the November North Ronaldsay individual and the February 1992 Northumberland male could be picked out immediately from accompanying Yellowhammers by this size difference.
- (13) The rump and the outer web of the feathers in the lowest row of scapulars seem a brighter rufous than on Yellowhammer (again, perhaps a result of the latter's lack of contrast). In addition, the three female buntings in question showed more-prominent narrow white fringes to the rump feathers, producing a scalloped effect (most noticeable on the lower rump).
- (14) Two of the three, and several Pine Buntings in Siberia, showed very distinct, clear-cut, white or off-white eye-rings.
- (15) The two North Ronaldsay females (and three previous males in Britain) all gave a distinctly different call, as well as many indistinguishable from Yellowhammer's: this call was a nervous, stuttering 'trr-rrr-rrr-ick' or 'pr-rr-rr-rr', given both in flight and from a perch.
- (16) The tips to the wing-coverts of Pine Bunting tend to be paler and more prominent on the median coverts than on the greater coverts, forming a distinct median-covert bar. Because of the notorious variability of this feature on many first-year buntings, however, we are unsure as to whether this is a reliable and constant difference between the two species.
- (17) Although not a usable field character, the underwing-coverts are white on Pine Bunting and yellow on Yellowhammer.

Conclusions

Since the appearance of the two very grey-looking male Pine Buntings in February 1992, it does seem that the previous general perception of female Pine Bunting as being a brown-and-white bird may be inaccurate for winter and early-spring individuals. This had been based perhaps on faded museum specimens or experience of the species on its breeding grounds.

The identity of these recent buntings, however, particularly the original Big Waters individual of 1990 and the two at the same locality in 1991, is still a matter of debate. Do Yellowhammers totally lacking yellow really exist? If they do, how do we prove that they are Yellowhammers? Are there any other features that may help separate these two species, and what are people's views on the criteria listed above? Were the 1991 buntings hybrids between the 1990 individual and a Yellowhammer? We welcome comments, observations, and, particularly, answers to the above questions from observers with experience of both species.

If no adverse comments are received on the suggested criteria, there are two possible courses of action. We can either accept female Pine Buntings on these criteria, or adopt the approach of the Swedish rarities committee, which refuses to accept sight records of *tristis* Chiffchaffs as it is impossible to ascertain the absence of yellow (a similar case could be made for Pine Bunting). We would recommend the former action, as, surely, it is better to allow through the odd hybrid that looks identical to Pine Bunting than to reject *all* female Pine Buntings, which would completely distort the true pattern of occurrence. If the 'miracle diagnosis' is discovered in the future and proven by DNA testing, there is nothing to stop the BBRC reviewing all the old records, anyway.

What is no longer open to doubt is that any putative female Pine Bunting will require the closest scrutiny or capture for a firm identification to be fully and confidently established.

Acknowledgments

We are greatly indebted to Urban Olsson and Professor Eugeny Panov for initial and continuing help and permission to use the results of their experience and hard work; to Hadoram Shirihai for his original opinion; to members of the British Birds Rarities Committee, past and present, who have put in a lot of work on this species; to Alan Brown, Alan Dean, Martin Eccles, Eric Meek, Jimmy Steele, Keith Vinicombe, and staff of North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory for helpful comments; to Eric Bird, Ian Fisher, Dave Patterson and George Reszeter for use of their photographs during preparation of this paper; to Peter Colston and the Natural History Museum, Tring, for access to skins; and to Martin Eccles for drawing fig. 1 and for redrawing Professor Panov's diagrams (fig. 2).

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Reviews

The Birds of Moray and Nairn. By **Martin Cook.** Mercat Press, Edinburgh, 1992. 273 pages; 24 black-and-white plates; 36 line-drawings. ISBN 1-873644-051. Paperback £9.95.

The current bird recorder has written the first bird book for this part of Scotland to appear this century. Rather brief introductory chapters sketch in the different habitats in the area, which stretches from the Cairngorm plateau to the Moray coast, some of the great variety being appositely illustrated by photographs, and describe ten birdwatching localities.

The systematic list reviews the 267 species which have occurred, of which 150 are known to have bred. Commoner species merit from a third of a page to two pages. Histograms or tables are used to show annual or half-monthly count totals for many species, most for the period 1970-91. Distribution maps, using a useful 5-km square grid, display all summer occurrences for 27 breeding species for the period 1981-90. Line-drawings and photographs decorate the text.

I would, perhaps, have liked more discussion of any changes that might have taken place in the area in recent decades, both in the habitat chapter and in the distribution of species, where BTO Atlas surveys are virtually ignored. That grumble apart, this is a well-written and meticulously researched book which fills a long-standing gap in Britain's county avifaunas.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

The Pied Flycatcher. By **Arne Lundberg & Rauno V. Alatalo.** T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1992. 267 pages; 8 black-and-white plates; 30 line-drawings; 31 tables; 103 figures. ISBN 0-85661-072-0. £19.00.

The Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* is the perfect passerine for breeding studies. Pied Flycatchers occur at high densities and eagerly take to nest-boxes. Most of the major studies are from Scandinavia and central Europe. Their British distribution does not embrace a strong ornithological university, and British enthusiasts are mainly amateurs who find it difficult to keep up with the literature and identify new subjects on which to publish.

This monograph is strongly biased towards the breeding season, which occupies about 90% of the pages. It is written in a scientific style with abundant numerical material and graphs culled from references (running to 15 pages) and a fair amount of the authors' unpublished material. It needs to be read at a steady pace to take it all in.

The most exciting thing about Pied Flycatchers is their polygynous breeding system in which the males can deceive the females by occupying two separate territories, often hundreds of metres apart. Human beings can readily recognise these deceivers because they occasionally visit their primary females so cannot sing so persistently on their second territory. Female Pied Flycatchers are fooled, apparently because the cost of checking out territories is high, with breeding success declining fast as the season advances.

In scientific terms, the species is attractive because it lends itself to ingenious study methods. The authors' experimental birds find their nest-boxes moving or changing quality and their mates being caught and taken away. The abundant stream of newly arriving migrants faces experimental choices designed to tease apart factors that are difficult to separate by direct observation alone. Birds seem to choose territories on the basis of nest quality and food resources and are less fussy about how good their mate is. One unexpected feature is that Pied and Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis* interbreed and produce fertile young in areas where they overlap.

The attractive feel and appearance of a Poyser book has become a cliché that has survived new ownership. Though this book is placed at the more serious end of the spectrum, persistent readers will enjoy this bird and its worthy book.

COLIN J. BIBBY

Wildlife After Gravel: twenty years of practical research by The Game Conservancy and ARC. By Nick Giles. Game Conservancy, Fordingbridge, 1992. 140 pages; 102 colour plates; 1 black-and-white plate; 20 line-drawings. ISBN 0 9500130 3 X. £19.45.

Gravel-pits are often the key inland birdwatching sites, yet most birdwatchers probably give little thought as to what makes them so attractive to birds. Many pits have developed as an accidental consequence of extraction, but, increasingly, gravel companies are looking to design pits for wildlife after-use.

This book describes the results of a pioneering study started 20 years ago by The Game Conservancy and ARC Ltd to restore and manage a site at Great Linford, Buckinghamshire. There are chapters on the general lessons learned during the project, breeding ecology of Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, habitat management for wading birds and wintering wildfowl, management of feral geese, and the interactions between bird and fish populations.

There is an inevitable tendency to discuss the research results and their management implications from a wildfowling point of view, but there is still plenty of interest for those who prefer to watch the birds. The interactions between the bird and fish populations make particularly interesting and salutary reading. The book is less successful in areas which have not been researched as part of the project, such as management for wading birds.

The discussion on the management of feral goose populations is particularly timely given the current debate on the 'problems' caused by Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*, ironically one of the species which has probably benefited most from the creation of gravel-pits. Anyone who thinks the problem is simple should read this chapter.

I have mixed views on this book. The chapters on the scientific work are excellent, but are probably too detailed to be used as a management manual. The concentration on the work at Great Linford inevitably means that some key references to other work are missed. Having said this, I think that the author and sponsoring organisations are to be congratulated, the former for presenting the detailed work in such a readable way, and the latter for having the foresight to support such a long-term ecological project. Would the average birdwatcher learn anything from this book? Yes!

KEN SMITH

Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Maritime Provinces. By Anthony J. Erskine. Nimbus/Nova Scotia Museum, Nova Scotia, 1992. 270 pages; 188 line-drawings; 188 distribution maps. ISBN 1-55109-010-4. Paperback C\$29.95.

The Maritime Provinces of Canada are made up of three provinces, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. The planning for the Atlas Project began in 1984. It covers the years 1986-90, and involved over 1,100 volunteer observers and regional co-ordinators, who spent in excess of 43,000 hours in the field. The Atlas was planned around the criteria established by *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock 1976). The book contains 214 distribution maps and accompanying species accounts, together with three useful introductory sections covering geographic background, historical background and 'What the Atlas Project achieved'. The 188 main breeding species are each given a full page, half of which is occupied by narrative and the other half by a 10 × 10 km-square map, plus a smaller 20 × 20 km-square map. The maps are clearly printed and show the strength of breeding evidence by three different sizes of red dot. Half pages are used for the 26 peripheral and casual species covered by the survey. The book is extremely well produced, with a soft cover, and there are delightful vignettes by Azor Vienneau accompanying each species. This is a standard work which comprehensively covers the breeding birds of the Maritimes and which will serve as a cornerstone for any future atlas project. The book is excellent value for money, and I can thoroughly recommend it as an essential purchase for anyone visiting that part of Canada.

PETER SMITH

Avian Systematics and Taxonomy. British Ornithologists' Club Centenary Volume. Edited by J. F. Monk. *Bull. BOC* 112A: 1-311. £30.00.

To many readers of *British Birds*, the British Ornithologists' Club may seem pretty arcane. A vague group of specialists who meet for dinner once a month, and produce a slim blue journal that seems to consist mostly of records of strange birds from even stranger places. This, however, belies the fact that 'the *Bulletin*' is a major journal of avian taxonomy: witness the fact that, of the 43 bird species described as new to science during the 1980s, no fewer than seven were published there. Only the *Wilson Bulletin*, with ten, exceeded this proud record. So, the Club really is a leading light in avian taxonomy; and it is 100 years old—time for a party!

This book is part of the birthday celebrations. A group of avian taxonomists and systematists was invited to write on the state of their science as the BOC enters its second century. The result is an interesting mix of contributions ranging from the historical to the contemporary. Perhaps to readers of *BB*, the most interesting will be the papers by Grant and Haffer. Peter Grant (not the late, and sorely missed, Kent birder, but a scientist from Princeton) describes, in his beautifully lucid way, how natural selection acts upon the anatomy of Darwin's finches, and alters their size and shape in response to climatic change. Jurgen Haffer presents a long and detailed review of changes in our ideas of what constitutes a species. Since most birders' lists depend upon what they may or may not 'tick', this is a vitally important subject (to them). The reasoning behind biological, morphological and phylogenetic species concepts is discussed at length. At present, there is a worrying trend towards the adoption of the phylogenetic—'If it looks different, it probably is a different species'—and this means that the world bird list might expand from about 8,000 to over 35,000 species.

A depressing aspect of this volume is the paucity of British authors—it is, after all, the *British Ornithologists' Club*. Philip Clancey, Hilary Fry and Peter Grant are British, but most of their research has been based overseas, so the only truly home-grown paper is by Alan Knox and Michael Walters, who describe the work and role of the Natural History Museum as a repository of our national collections. It is sad to think that this may summarise the role of Britain in contemporary avian systematics: exporter of talent, custodian of samples, and publisher of other people's research.

Nevertheless, Happy Birthday BOC, and good luck in the next one hundred years!

DAVID T. PARKIN

Birds: a photographic guide to the birds of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore. By Morten Strange & Allen Jeyarajasingam. Sun Trec, Singapore, 1993. 269 pages; over 300 colour plates; 22 maps. ISBN 981-00-3290-0. Paperback US\$20.90.

Of the total of 638 species recorded in the area covered by this book, 45% are illustrated by colour photographs, all but a handful taken by one or other of the two authors. Two species are covered on each page, with around 20% of the space being occupied by the photographs and the rest by brief texts: minimal information on appearance and identification, a little more, usually, on distribution and habitat, and most on general behaviour, breeding habits and so on. With 55% of the area's birds not covered at all (except in a checklist) and the rather small photographs being limited to one individual (sometimes male, sometimes female, sometimes in non-adult plumage), this book could not be used as a sole identification guide for the area. It is, however, an exceedingly handy source of reference, for many of the species are illustrated with colour photographs in print for the first time. Since it is to be used for reference purposes, it is, therefore, irritating that the photographs are arranged within sections dealing separately with five habitats, so, for instance, the woodpeckers are not all together in one place.

The authors have achieved wonders in amassing, mostly through their own labours, photographs of such a high proportion of frequently difficult-to-approach birds. This book will be a welcome addition to the libraries of everyone interested in the birds of Southeast Asia.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Wren. By **Edward A. Armstrong.** (Shire Publications, Princes Risborough, 1992. 24 pages. ISBN 0-7478-0160-6. Paperback £1.95) The late Reverend Armstrong's *The Wren* (1955) was a classic Collins 'New Naturalist' monograph. Little wonder, therefore, that this Shire Natural History booklet is absolutely crammed with facts: 14 pages of condensed information and ten pages of illustrations. I cannot imagine that there is any publication which is better value for £1.95.

JTRS

What is Happening to our Garden Birds? By **Rupert Barrington.** (Dorrance Publishing, Pittsburgh, 1993. 74 pages. ISBN 0-8059-3302-6. Paperback £3.95) The author's enthusiasm shows through on every page, and his 83 years' experience is brought to bear on ways to encourage a prolific and rich bird population in English gardens.

JTRS

West Country Wildlife—a naturalist's year in Devon and Cornwall. By **Kelvin Boot & Elaine Franks.** (George Philip, London, 1992. 176 pages. £16.99) This is a typical 'coffee-table' book nicely produced and attractively illustrated, but superficial. The text is rambling and contains many inaccuracies: West Country moorlands are not poor for birdwatching; Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* are not more common than Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* in Cornwall; but it is true that Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* are not common in the West Country—they are extinct! The illustrations are generally pleasing and relevant. But what is the Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* doing with a chick? In the West Country, Avocets winter, they do not breed.

HUMPHREY SITTERS

Usborne Science & Nature: ornithology. By **Felicity Brooks & Bridget Gibbs.** (Usborne Publishing, London, 1992. 48 pages. ISBN 0-7460-0686-1. Hardback £6.50, paperback £4.50) An exceedingly 'busy' book designed for the 9- to 16-year-old and filled (indeed crammed) with interesting ornithological information on a huge variety of subjects. The use by Usborne of Peter Holden as their consultant has ensured that this really is a useful book, which can be strongly recommended for anyone who is becoming serious about his or her hobby.

JTRS

Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers. By **Arthur Cleveland Bent.** Illustrated by **William Zimmer-**

man. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992. Deluxe edition. 262 pages. ISBN 0-253-31160-8. £25.00) This is Arthur Cleveland Bent's 1939 book republished with new paintings, in coffee-table style.

JTRS

Pasarile Clocitoare din Romania. By **Victor Ciochia.** (Editura Stiintifica, Bucharest, 1992. 386 pages. ISBN 973-44-0060-6. Softback, no price quoted) Held up for economic reasons, this Romanian breeding-bird atlas summarises fieldwork carried out during 1976-81, and was ready for publication in 1984. For non-Romanian readers, the main interest is the 250 species maps. Usually the 50-km-square recording unit would be too crude to show interesting distributions for a small country, but it suffices in this case because Romania embraces such a wide range of altitudes (0-2,500 m) and habitats. The latter include 600 km of the Danube and its delta, as well as extensive forests and mountains.

HUMPHREY SITTERS

Kingfisher. By **Paola Fioratti.** Translated by **Sylvia Sullivan.** (HarperCollins, London, 1992. 144 pages. ISBN 0-00-219957-2. £16.99) Lots of colour photographs (mostly of Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*); for the coffee table rather than the reference library.

JTRS

The Birds of Sydney: County of Cumberland, New South Wales, 1770-1989. 2nd edn. By **E. S. Hoskin, K. A. Hindwood & A. R. McGill.** (Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton (NSW), 1991. 292 pages. ISBN 0-949324-40-X. A\$39.00) This second edition (the first was published in 1958) is much expanded and includes 70 additional species. Chapters include where to see birds around Sydney, status changes, extensions of range, early and late dates for migrants, declines, feeding habits, suggested trees and shrubs to plant, identification notes, and, of course, a systematic list, which includes a brief description of each species as well as a paragraph on its status. I would have preferred more on status and less on identification, for there are excellent Australian field guides now available, but anyone spending time in Sydney will certainly find this book very useful.

DAVID FISHER

Audubon to Xantus: the lives of those commemorated in North American bird names. By **Barbara Mearns & Richard Mearns.** Illustrated by **Dana Gardner.** (Academic Press, London, 1992. 588 pages. ISBN 0-12-487423-1. £29.50) Everyone who

enjoyed the Mearnses' *Biographies for Birdwatchers: the lives of those commemorated in Western Palearctic bird names* (1988), reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 82: 383-384, will want this equally enjoyable companion volume. The total of 98 biographies makes fascinating reading. If you have ever wondered about the people whose names we use constantly (e.g. Barrow, Bonaparte, Cory, Forster, Leach, Ross, Sabine), this book will tell you all the facts, in a highly readable form. Theirs is the history of ornithology.

JTRS

Bibliographie d'Ornithologie Française 1945-1965. By Yves Muller. (SFF, SEO, SOF, Paris, 1992. 260 pages. ISBN 2-9506548-1-9. Softback FF230) Ronsil (1948-49) listed 11,000 ornithological works published in French/Latin between 1473 and 1944, on France and its colonies. Muller's 2,401 entries cover the period 1945-65, for birds recorded within the present-day political boundaries of France, thus including Corsica (but not the Channel Islands). The bulk of the book consists of five indexes: (i) full references, listed alphabetically by author (93 pages), each prefaced by a five-figure number for cross-referencing in the following indexes; (ii) journals cited (11 pages), these including many 'foreign' ones (e.g. *BB*); (iii) geographical index of administrative regions and départements (17 pages), with several subdivisions (e.g. Camargue, Dombes); (iv) species index (106 pages), with individual maps (different colours denote those départements with references to breeding or otherwise); (v) subject index (six pages). Thoroughly professional, beautifully designed, easy to use and, together with proposed volumes for 1966-80 and 1981-90, surely indispensable for researchers, both in France and beyond.

DAC

Songs of Argentinian Birds. By Robert Straneck. (Lola, Buenos Aires. Four cassettes;

eight booklets. £85.00) There are 487 species recorded—about half the Argentinian total. Species are arranged systematically within distinct regions/habitats (conveniently one per booklet and cassette side). About one hour per tape gives an adequate average of 35 seconds per species. Informative booklets include a vignette, brief English notes on each species' song/habitat, plus a map showing the region covered. The recordings are of good quality and more comprehensive than any in my collection from other Central and South American countries. A fine achievement, and a vital aid in identifying birds in Argentina and neighbouring regions.

PETER ROBERTS

Fågelsång i Östra Sibirien (Bird Songs of Eastern Siberia). By Magnus Ullman. (Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening, Stockholm, 1992. Cassette. £8.50) The list of 52 species included on this tape reads like a birdwatcher's dream. It was, therefore, disappointing to hear the results of this recordist's travels in Siberia. I found the quality of this tape very poor, especially when compared with other, similar tapes produced in recent years. In many instances, the 'target' species is incredibly quiet, and most tracks are accompanied by a background noise which sounds as if they were all recorded next to a rushing river. This prevents the listener from sitting back and enjoying the songs, so I feel that this tape will be of use only as a reference.

STEVE ROOKE

The Wayland Book of Common British Birds: a photographic guide. By Nick Williams. (Wayland Publishers, Hove, 1992. 48 pages. ISBN 0-7502-0533-4. £8.99) 'A guide to identifying Britain's 50 commonest birds.' Suitable for the 5- to 10-year-old who has not yet joined the Young Ornithologists' Club.

JTRS



Announcement

Books in British BirdShop The following books have been added this month:

Cook *The Birds of Moray and Nairn* (Mercat Press); Harrison & Loxton *The Bird: master of flight* (Cassell); Giles *Wildlife After Gravel* (Game Conservancy/ARC); Lundberg & Alatalo *The Pied Flycatcher* (Poyser); Pritchard, Housden *et al.* (eds.) *Important Bird Areas in the United Kingdom: including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man* (RSPB/JNCC); Strange & Jeyarajasingam *Birds: a photographic guide to the birds of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore* (Sun Tree).

Please use the form on pages v & vi for all your book orders.



More Red Kites poisoned

A RED KITE *Milvus milvus* found dead in Wales in March this year was the sixteenth poisoned there in the last four years. Five, including this latest victim, were killed near Aberystwyth, Ceredigion.

The steady increase of the Red Kite in Wales is well known, and culminated in 99* nests this year. The continuing upturn in the bird's fortunes are in no small way due to local people. RSPB Conservation Officer (and our correspondent in Wales), Steph Tyler, wrote to us and commented: 'Most farmers are proud and protective towards this elegant bird of prey, but a few individuals persist with their Victorian attitudes. It is ironic that while the future of the kite has been safeguarded by the efforts of legions of Welsh farmers, a handful of landowners continue to put this beautiful bird at risk.'

Not long after all this, a poisoned Red Kite was found dead just 9 km from the RSPB headquarters in Bedfordshire. This was one of the 20 kites released in England last year and had been in the area for some time; it was one of at least seven known to have perished in this way since the reintroduction project began in 1989. Poisoning has accounted for almost 70% of the recorded deaths so far.

We are told, time and time again, that the illegal and/or irresponsible use of poisons is no longer a problem in the countryside – a thing of the past, in fact. Forgive us if we remain sceptical . . .

*The 100th breeding pair in Wales was located in early June (Peter Davis *in litt.*) EDS

New DG at Game Conservancy

Our congratulations to Dr Dick Potts, who became Director General of the Game Conservancy in March. Best known for a near lifetime's work on the Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*,

Dick has also done as much as anybody to build bridges across the awkward gap which exists between those who shoot birds and those who don't. The Conservancy is in good hands.

WOS Conference

On 27th March 1993, about 100 enthusiasts gathered at Aberystwyth for the sixth Welsh Ornithological Conference. After the WOS AGM, Iolo Williams depressed us by reporting on recent survey work showing declines in several Welsh breeding species (e.g. Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* and Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*) and then cheered us up with news of increases in Red Kites *Milvus milvus* and Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*, the first recent breeding record of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* and the first-ever breeding of Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*.

The main theme of the Conference was waders. Brayton Holt and Richard Smith produced excellently illustrated contributions on regular and vagrant species in Wales, and Steph Tyler talked on the status of some of the breeding waders; she showed how Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* and Common Sand-

pipers *Actitis hypoleucos* are faring well, while Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, Common Snipes *Gallinago gallinago* and Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus* are rapidly disappearing. On a bright note, Dave Elliott described how the RSPB is developing the new Conwy reserve on spoil dumped from the construction of the Conwy tunnel: waders are already breeding there (including Gwynedd's first Little Ringed Plovers in 1992) and a good-sized roost has been established. Bob Howells's fascinating résumé of his valuable long-term work on the Burry Inlet (West Glamorgan/Dyfed) showed a worrying decline in some wader species there. Ray Waters rounded off an enjoyable conference most appropriately, using Birds of Estuaries Enquiry data to illustrate the importance of Welsh estuaries in the context of the East Atlantic Flyway. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Stora story

It always makes a pleasant change to give a commercial firm a well-deserved pat on the back. We were pleased to learn (*Packaging Week*, April 1993) that the Stora Group has set aside 10,000 ha of Swedish forest as a sanctuary for the rare and declining White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*.

Biggest Irish twitch

The first-winter male White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* trapped and released at Copeland Bird Observatory on 16th April and then relocated at lunchtime on 17th produced Ireland's largest-ever 'twitch' on 18th April, with 150-200 birders travelling (mostly from England) to see it. This was the fourth Irish record and the first for over 100 years, the third having been in Co. Mayo on 9th January 1885.

Over £200 was levied from visiting twitchers, the first such invasion on Copeland, despite the observatory having had two West Palearctic firsts: Fox Sparrow *Zonotrichia iliaca* in June 1961 and Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* in October 1963 (both before twitchers evolved).

Copeland is a great observatory and deserves to be well covered. The Booking Secretary is Neville McKee, 65 Temple Rise, Templepatrick, Ballyclare, Co. Antrim BT39 0AG. (Contributed by Anthony McGeehan)

Tunnel vision?

One early morning in June one of us spent a pleasant hour on a well-known bridge in East Anglia watching and listening to Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus*. Six or seven individuals were around, including four very noisy males, and four were watched together twice for short periods. One male gave what current bird-speak calls 'crippling views'. Also present were several other observers, all armed with expensive optics and talking knowledgeably about orioles and other rare birds; they certainly saw the 'crippler', and must have heard others (although they clearly did not recognise the yellow birds' frequent 'eat calls'), but, after a while, their conclusion was that it was a relatively poor morning with only two orioles present. Strange . . . but not at all surprising, perhaps; after all, none of them seemed to be looking at any other birds at all and all of them missed a Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* displaying in spectacular fashion overhead and a Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* which flew under the bridge, calling frequently. It was all rather depressing, really.

Quail query

Has anyone ever heard a Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (migrant or otherwise) giving the well-known 'wet-my-lips' call in flight? If so, we'd like to hear from you.

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And now there is a bird observatory fully operational and situated right on the shore in the centre of the best wader areas. The bird observatory offers a range of accommodation, from a five-bed self-contained chalet to 20

bunks/beds in a separate unit (air-conditioned) or bush camping plus BBQ cooking facilities. There are two resident wardens, and it is open throughout the year. There is an excellent nearby airport with daily flight connections to major cities.

Where is this place? Broome in Western Australia. The address to write to is Broome Bird Observatory, PO Box 1313, Broome, WA 6725, Australia; tel. 091 935600.

In March/April 1993, we counted 36,000 waders, in 370 flocks in 22 days, setting off on their non-stop flight to China (5,000 km, three days). It was most moving to see and hear their obvious excitement and the decision-making process over the first five to ten minutes before they got into V-formation and disappeared out of sight. (Contributed by Dr C. D. T. Minton)

Djibouti report

Djibouti III Migrant Raptor Count, by Geoff & Hilary Welch, is a detailed account of the third expedition (September-November 1987) to count the huge numbers of raptors which cross the narrows of the Bab-el-Mandeb every autumn on their way from Arabia into Africa. With more extensive coverage than before, the observers recorded 246,478 raptors of 26 species crossing the strait in 38 days. The most numerous birds by far were Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus* (98,339, plus 29,853 *Buteo* sp.) and Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis* (76,586, plus 27,922 *Aquila* sp.). In addition to full details of the raptor counts, the report includes a complete systematic list for the expedition and also an annotated list of spring migrants seen over three seasons. It is available (price £5.00) from Geoff Welch, Minsmere Reserve, Westleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 3BY.

Colour-marked Black-tailed Godwits

Observers everywhere in Europe and Africa are asked to look out for Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* with yellow wing-bars, and yellow rings (with a black horizontal bar in the middle) on both legs. Such birds will have been marked in Iceland by a Dutch WIWO-expedition in summer 1993. Please report sightings to Gerrit J. Gerritsen, Julianastraat 40, 8019 AX Zwolle, The Netherlands.

'Acrocephalus'

We were very pleased to receive the latest issue of *Acrocephalus* (vol. 14, no. 56-57): evidence that normal life continues in at least part of the former Yugoslavia. *Acrocephalus* is the journal of the Bird Watching and Bird Study Association of Slovenia (with Italy to the west, Austria to the north, Hungary to the east, and Croatia to the south).

The papers in this issue are mostly concerned with the birds of Cerknisko jezero (Lake Cerknica), and there are English summaries.

The address of the Association is 61000 Ljubljana, Langusova 10, Slovenia.

Pittas

Information on pittas (Pittidae) is requested for a new book, *The Pittas of the World*. Field observations (or even notes on captive birds) are needed concerning vocalisations, breeding records, nest sites and nests, plumage of juveniles, behaviour and diet. Records of pittas killed striking windows or as a result of other accidents are of interest; also current status and population estimates.

Photos loaned for reference will be returned in due course, and all contributions will be gratefully acknowledged in the book.

Please send information to: Johannes Erritzoe, Taps Old Rectory, DK-6070 Christiansfeld, Denmark.

Bursaries for young wildlife artists

Six young wildlife artists are to benefit from the first awards made by a new bursary scheme, organised by Lloyds Private Banking and the Society of Wildlife Artists.

The award winners are: Samantha Hignett of Saffron Walden, Essex; James McCallum of Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk; Ian Claxton of Swardeston, Norfolk; James Dunsmore of Cockfosters, Hertfordshire; Keith Andrews of Kinlochbervie, Sutherland; and Steve Gordon of Liverpool.

The bursary has been established to encourage and support talented young artists aged 15 to 25. The awards of up to £500 may be used to assist with such things as education, travel expenses and materials. The winners' work is

displayed at the Society of Wildlife Artists annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries, London, from 29th July to 13th August.

Samantha Hignett's award will enable her to spend time sketching seabirds and seals on Bardsey Island. James McCallum and Ian Claxton will be able to attend a bird-drawing course in Scotland with wildlife artist John Busby. James Dunsmore's award will help to fund a trip to Belize, where he will record birds and insects. Keith Andrews will buy materials to help him draw wildlife around his Scottish home, while Steve Gordon will use his award to help him portray wildlife in the city of Liverpool.

Aveyron and the Causses

French ornithologist Peyo d'Andurain is writing a book on the birds of the Département of Aveyron and the limestone plateaux called the Causses, between Millau and Florac. He would be glad to hear from anyone willing to send him records of interesting birds seen there. The address to write to is Langlas-Mostuéjols, 12720 France. (Contributed by Richard Vaughan)

Dyfed Conference

The tenth joint Dyfed Wildlife Trust/BTO Pembrokeshire Bird Conference will be held on 27th November. Details from Dyfed Wildlife Trust, 7 Market Street, Haverfordwest, Dyfed SA61 1NF.

Come to the Fair!

The British Birdwatching Fair is at Rutland Water from Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd August. The BB stand is no. M2/28 (no. 28 in marquee no. 2). Come and say 'Hello'.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—Northeast

Dave Holman—East Anglia

Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland

David Tomlinson—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

Keith Vinicombe—Southwest

John Wilson—Northwest

Oran takes on IWC

Oran O'Sullivan has been appointed General Manager of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy. He will be responsible for all the day-to-day running of the IWC.

A member since the early 1970s, a Council member of Cape Clear Bird Observatory and co-editor of the 'Irish Bird Report' since 1987, Oran's skill and enthusiasm should be just what's needed for the organisation that combines for Ireland the roles carried out in Britain by the BTO and the RSPB.

New Recorder

Geoff Neal, 36 The Ridgeway, Hawarden, Deeside, Clwyd CH5 3ER, has taken over from Peter Rathbone as Recorder for Clwyd (Denbighshire and Flintshire).

Silly corner

Our thanks to the many correspondents who drew our attention to the following misprints: White-tailed Seagull – that *had* to come up some time (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*), Heron Gull (*The Engineer*), Herring Full (Bristol Ornithological Club's *Bird News*), Cough (*Western Telegraph*) and Hoppy (*Bird Watching*). We found a classic example of how not to word a caption, beside a very nice photograph of a Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: it says 'Did you know that Cornwall's odd pair of nesting Dunlin are the most southerly breeding birds in the world?' (*Bird Watching*).



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 14th June to 19th July 1993
These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Loch of Harry (Orkney), 15th June.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 23rd June.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 11th-12th July.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Worth (Kent), 10th June; Barmston (Humberside) and Witon (Cleveland), 19th June; St Margaret's Bay (Kent), 20th June; Hadleigh Castle Country Park (Essex), 24th June; near Reculver (Kent), 11th July.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* Brood of five young, Northern Ireland (first proof of breeding there).

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* Individual last seen 19th June relocated at Burnham Norton (Norfolk), 18th July.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Cley (Norfolk), 25th June; two, Stanpit Marsh (Dorset), 28th June.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Read's Island (Humberside), 2nd July.

American Golden Plover *P. dominica* Kilshannig, Castlegregory (Co. Kerry), 16th-18th July.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* Loch of Strathbeg (Grampian), 4th-5th July.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Kilshannig, 16th-18th July.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* Groomsport (Co. Down), 15th June (first for Northern Ireland).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Point Lynas, Anglesey (Gwynedd), 22nd June; near Swansea (West Glamorgan), 4th-5th July.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Hickling Broad/Breydon Water area (Norfolk), 13th to at least 18th July.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* Beacon Ponds (Humberside), 15th-20th June; Scolt Head (Norfolk), 8th-15th July; intermittently off Northumberland coast, 12th-17th July.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* Llyn Traffwyll (Gwynedd), 18th June; presumed same, Cemlyn Lagoon, Anglesey, 19th-23rd June; Abberton Reservoir (Essex), 3rd-7th July.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* Early June immature male rediscovered Aranmore Island (Co. Donegal), 12th-18th July.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* Filey (North Yorkshire), 27th June to at least 18th July.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Two, Capel-le-Ferne (Kent), 15th-27th June; Calf of Man (Isle of Man), 21st June.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Minsmere (Suffolk), 19th June.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* Skomer (Dyfed), 2nd-5th July.

Woodchat Shrike *L. senator* Goss Moor (Cornwall), 21st June; Durlleston Country Park (Dorset), 24th June; Selsey Bill (West Sussex), 25th June; Kelling Quaggs (Norfolk), 22nd June to at least 18th July.

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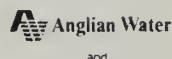
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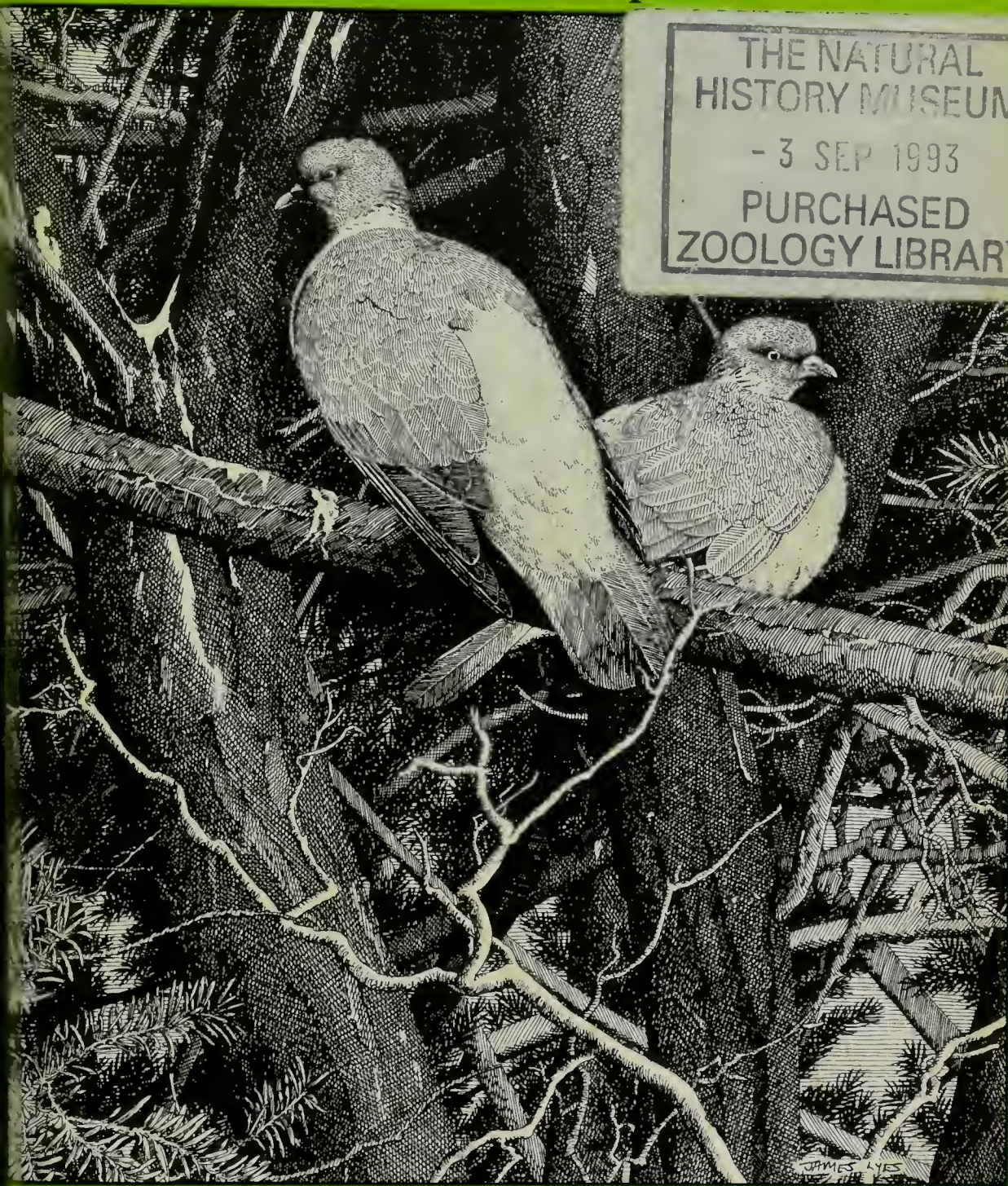
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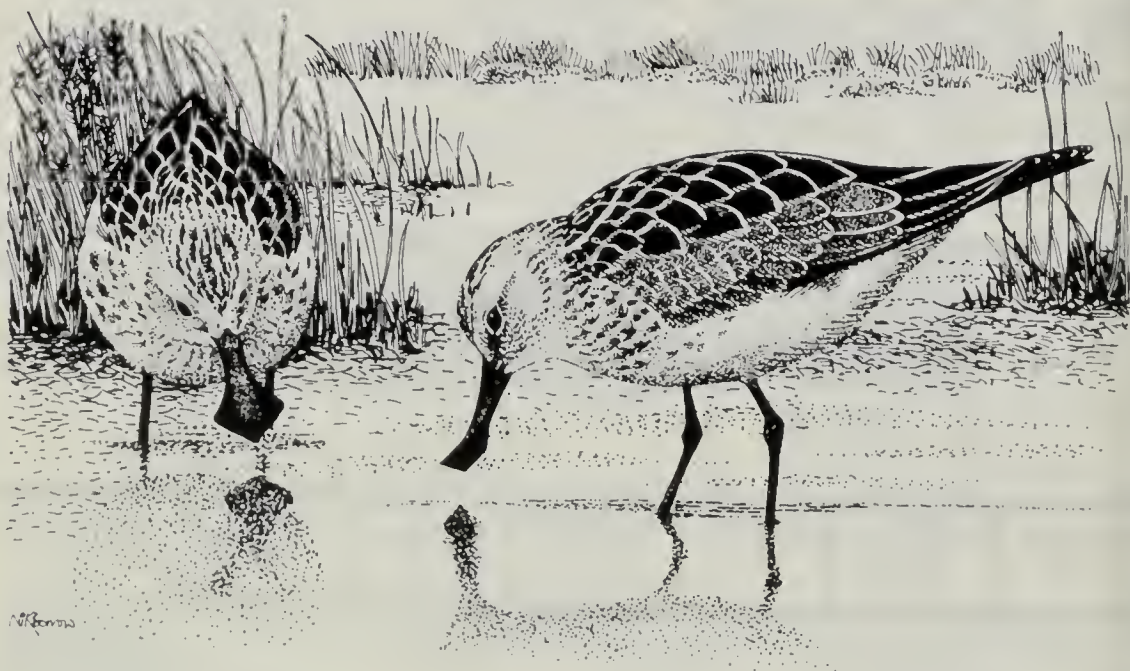
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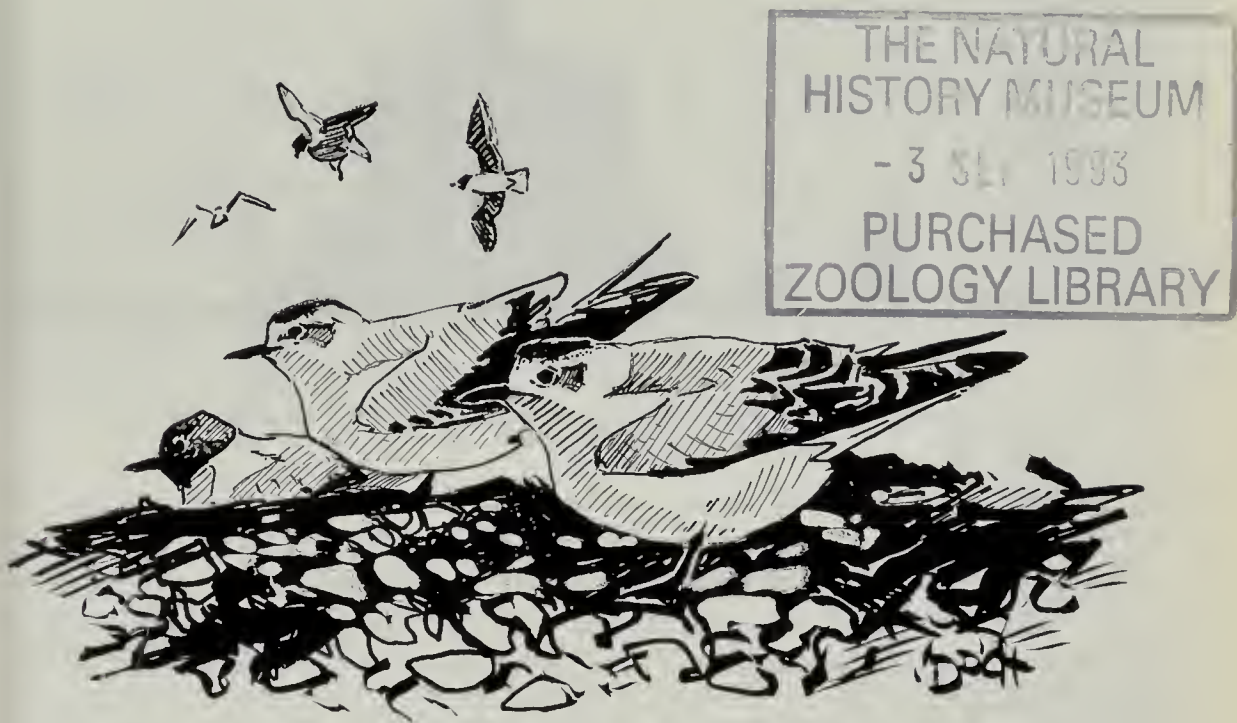


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British Birds

VOLUME 86 NUMBER 9 SEPTEMBER 1993



Spring passage of Little Gulls across Northern England

Doug Messenger

For more than 20 years, the Little Gulls *Larus minutus* off the Merseyside coast of Northwest England have been attracting increasing attention, as the species' status, particularly as a spring passage migrant, has undergone a quite remarkable change (Smith 1987). This spring movement, from the Irish Sea wintering grounds to breeding areas in Finland, has become a regular spectacle at Scaforth, having increased from single-figure counts in the 1960s to several hundreds in the late 1980s.

The details of this change were well recorded during the 1970s, and exceptionally well during the 1980s. At Scaforth, counts were carried out daily, and usually several times a day. A grand total of 32,000 bird-days was recorded in the three years 1987-89, and the typical pattern is shown in fig. 1.

The main passage period is between early April and early May. Peak counts are always in the second half of April, with more than 90% of gulls leaving before the middle of May. The start and finish of this period are often blurred by either windblown individuals in March or oversummering ones in May.

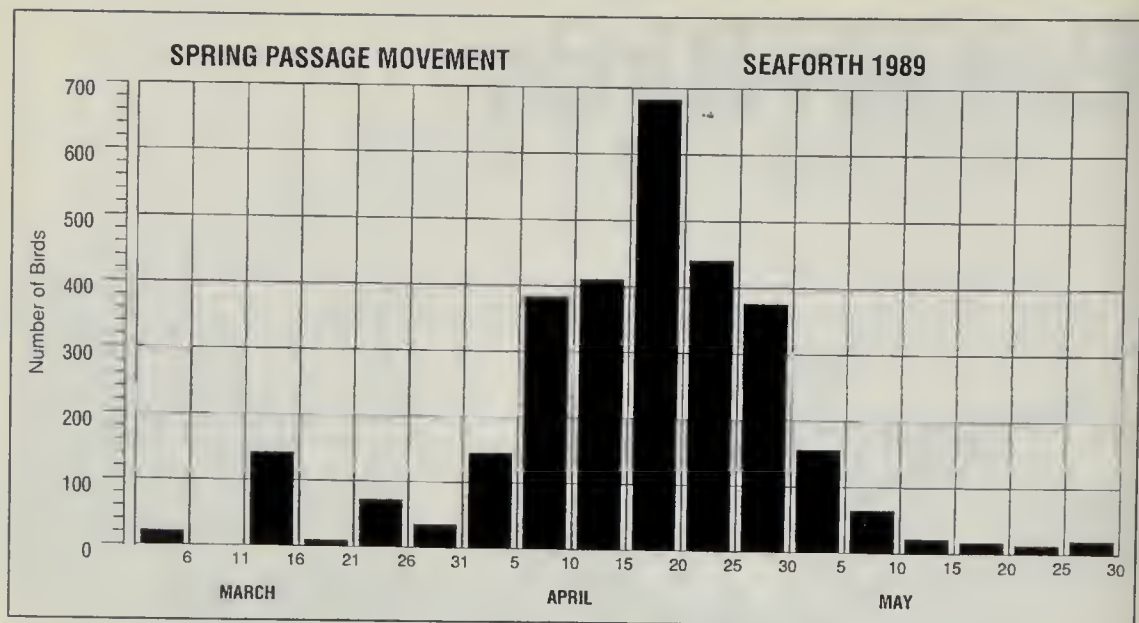


Fig. 1. Spring passage of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* at Scaforth, Merseyside, in 1989

During 1980-89, peak counts at Scaforth increased every spring by an average of 20%, reaching a maximum of 680 on 20th April 1989 (see fig. 2). This figure of 680 was the peak number of Little Gulls present at one time and within 200 m of one observation point; it therefore represents only a fraction of the number passing through Scaforth during the five or six weeks of the passage period.

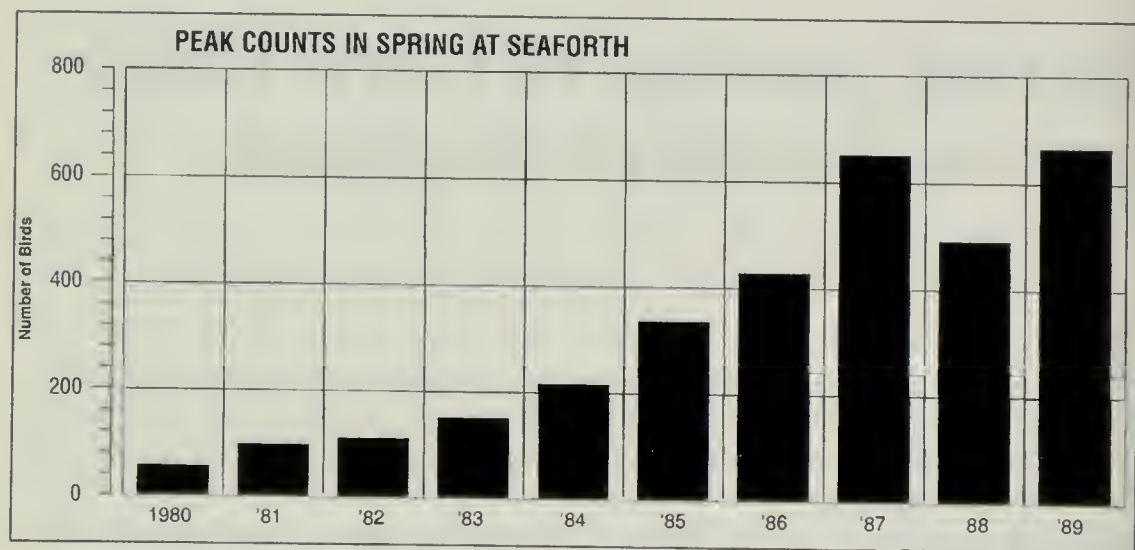


Fig. 2. Peak spring counts of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* at Scaforth, Merseyside, 1980-89

Because of the constant movement of Little Gulls between Scaforth, the adjacent Crosby Marina and the Mersey and Alt estuaries (fig. 3), it is possible only to guess at the total number of gulls involved. One can never be sure that those counted on one day are not the same ones as those counted the previous day, or even the previous week. Very close attention to plumage details and stage of moult, however, enables some individuals to be identified, and this does indicate that there is a constant movement through Scaforth and that we do see some different individuals each day.

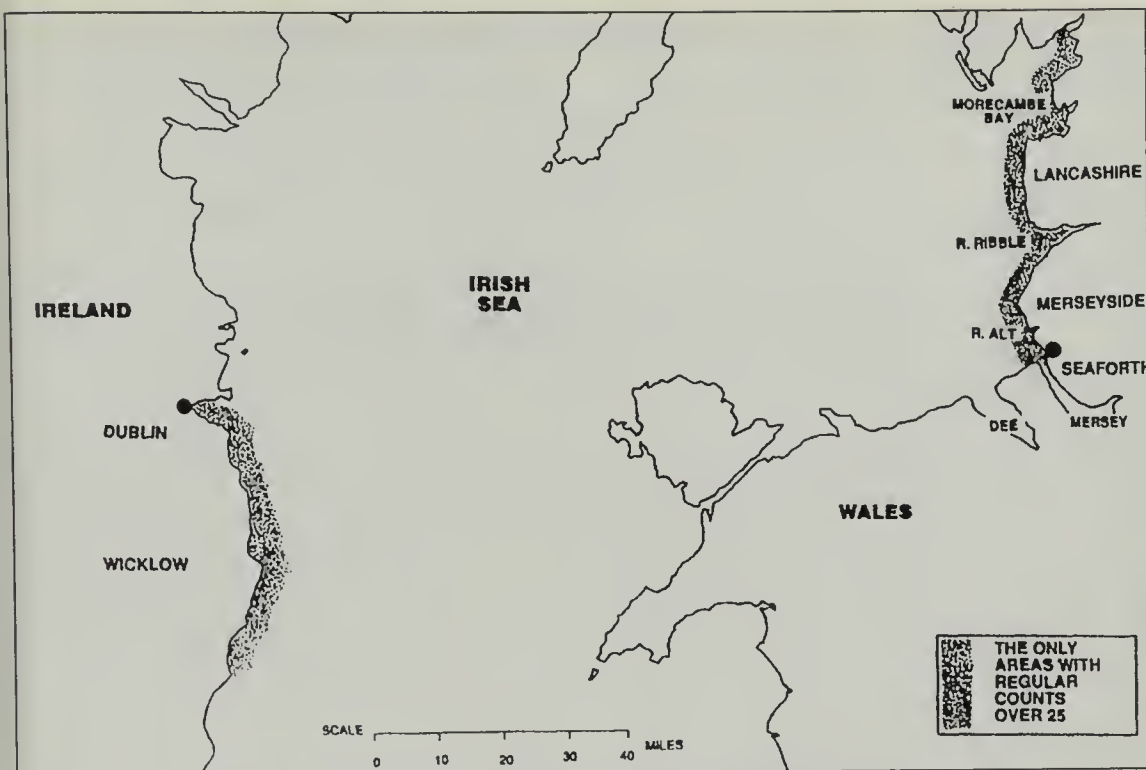


Fig. 3. Wintering areas of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* in the Irish Sea

The 1989-91 survey

A survey was carried out in April of each year during 1989-91, with the aim of locating and estimating the numbers of Little Gulls present along that stretch of the west coast between Anglesey and the Solway. Approximately 30 observers took part each year and were positioned fairly regularly along the 280 miles (450 km) of coastline. The results showed that more than 98% of the gulls recorded were along the 3 miles (4.8 km) of coastline between the Alt estuary and Seaforth. This appears to be an extremely narrow 'gateway' at which almost the entire Irish Sea wintering population assembles at the start of the next leg of the journey to Finland.

Movement from the Irish Sea

It has been tentatively suggested that 'an overland route is probable' (Smith 1987). This rather bold (but qualified) hypothesis has never been subjected to any further discussion, and the apparent uncertainty over the route used has remained.

To examine this uncertainty, it helps to look back in the year to the numbers of Little Gulls wintering in the Irish Sea. Since the early 1970s, three-figure counts have been recorded almost every winter, and with increasing frequency. These are normally associated with onshore winds and almost always along two fairly limited stretches of coastline, one on each side of the Irish Sea (see fig. 3). The biggest numbers are invariably on the Co. Wicklow coast (Rutledge 1974, 1990) and restricted to within 30 miles (48 km) south of Dublin. Exceptional counts of 500+ in February and 600+ in January 1991 (B. Madden *in litt.*) give an indication of the numbers actually wintering in this sea area and show a considerable increase on previous estimates (Hutchinson & Neath 1978).

The only other Irish Sea coastline with regular high winter counts is the Lancashire/Merseyside coast. Here, too, three-figure counts of wind-driven birds are frequent, although numbers are not so high as in Ireland.

Little Gulls usually begin to arrive on these coasts immediately the winds exceed force 3 (B. Madden *in litt.*; personal observations) and, as they increase in severity, so more gulls arrive. The high counts on one side of the Irish Sea have never occurred on the same day (and rarely in the same week) as high counts on the other side. This gives rise to the thought that these Irish Sea gulls are in fact a discrete population which is moved about by winds and/or the availability of food, and is 'dumped'—presumably fragmented—on the nearest coast(s) when the gales commence. This would also explain why even severe gales are not guaranteed to produce any Little Gulls at any particular location (Rutledge 1990).

As the gales subside, usually in March, coincidentally these several hundred (mostly adult) gulls become migrants. As the numbers off Wicklow decrease through March and April, so records on Merseyside increase as the gulls assemble at Seaforth en route to Finland.

The eastward passage

The choice of direction for continuation of the movement beyond Seaforth is rather limited. Records of Little Gulls moving north around or across Scotland in spring are extremely scarce (Cunningham 1983; Verrall & Bourne 1982). That they fly south and around the Welsh coast and southern England is extremely unlikely, and not supported by any evidence.

For confirmation of, or at least some supporting evidence for, Smith's (1987) hypothesis, over 250 county bird reports and avifaunas were searched. All records of Little Gulls more than 20 miles (32 km) inland from any coast were extracted, and a selection is presented in figs. 4-6. Some personal correspondence was also necessary for confirmation of some records, and for expansion and/or breaking-down of a few, rather vague, general statements.

As the gulls move eastwards from Seaforth, they do so at great height (Smith 1987). On many occasions, small flocks have been seen to spiral high into the sky and eventually to disappear from view: parties up to 50 strong have been recorded on one or two occasions, while flocks of half this size are regularly seen (personal observations). Groups of fewer than ten almost certainly attract insufficient attention to be recorded as 'spiralling' birds.

The commencement of the spiralling is always apparently chaotic and accompanied by much calling. As the gulls gain height, so they become more ordered and move away as a fairly compact, coherent flock. Peak daily counts are generally in the afternoon, and, since numbers usually decrease towards evening, it is probable that departure and 'spiralling' continue after dark, as there are never any gulls present at dawn (personal observations).

An incidental observation which has been noted only recently is the apparent 'reconnaissance flights'. On many occasions in April 1991, Little Gulls were seen to spiral upwards and disappear from view, only to return again within five or ten minutes. Once, there were 17 adults on the Seaforth



reserve: all took flight together and disappeared at height, flying eastwards: within five minutes, however, 17 adults reappeared on the reserve. On another occasion, 42 individuals were seen to go through the same procedure, and again, within five minutes, the same number reappeared. One may justifiably assume that the coincidence of these counts was due to the same flocks returning each time. A possible explanation for these 'dummy runs' is that the gulls were testing or assessing the weather conditions before embarking on the cross-country leg of their journey. An incorrect assessment at this point could be a reason why some do not complete the journey in one attempt.

The majority of the Seaforth Little Gulls move away in the manner outlined above, and many will fly high over the English east coast a few hours later. These are the gulls which are unrecorded on the cross-country journey and thus can provide no direct confirmation for Smith's (1987) hypothesis. Other records, however, do provide support for the idea of a cross-country migration: when Little Gulls, for reasons of adverse weather, tiredness or whatever, descend or stop off part-way through their journey.

The first real evidence of a cross-country movement is as the gulls move east out of Merseyside, into Greater Manchester and towards the Pennines. Two of the largest of many waters in the area are Pennington Flash and Audenshaw Reservoir (see fig. 7), both of which are fairly well watched. During 1975-89, some Little Gulls were recorded each spring at both waters. Counts were usually in low single figures, but were quite regular. At Audenshaw there were occasional double-figure counts, with peaks of 15 on 8th May 1980, 20 on 2nd May 1984 and 27 on 5th May 1991 (R. Travis *in litt.*).

Despite the relative remoteness of some of the reservoirs in this area of the west Pennines, and the consequent paucity of records, the pattern of a passage movement is still very clear. The records for all the waters of east Lancashire and Greater Manchester have been totalled and are shown in fig. 4.

As the gulls progress over the Pennines, they travel on a narrow front, with inland records north of the River Ribble being scarce. As they move into West Yorkshire, into the area bounded roughly by Leeds, Sheffield,

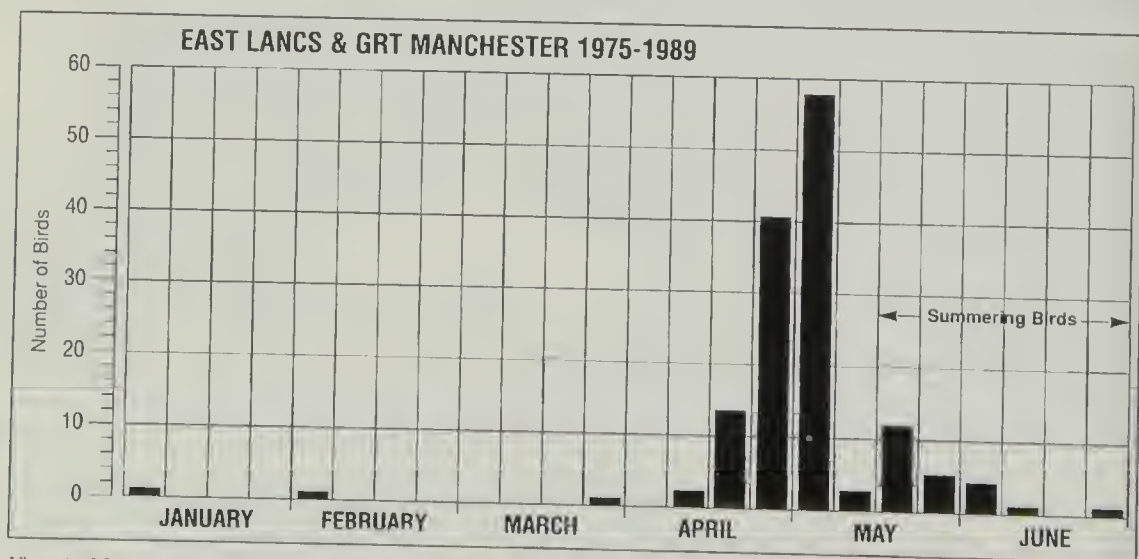


Fig. 4. Numbers of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* recorded in east Lancashire and Greater Manchester, 1975-89

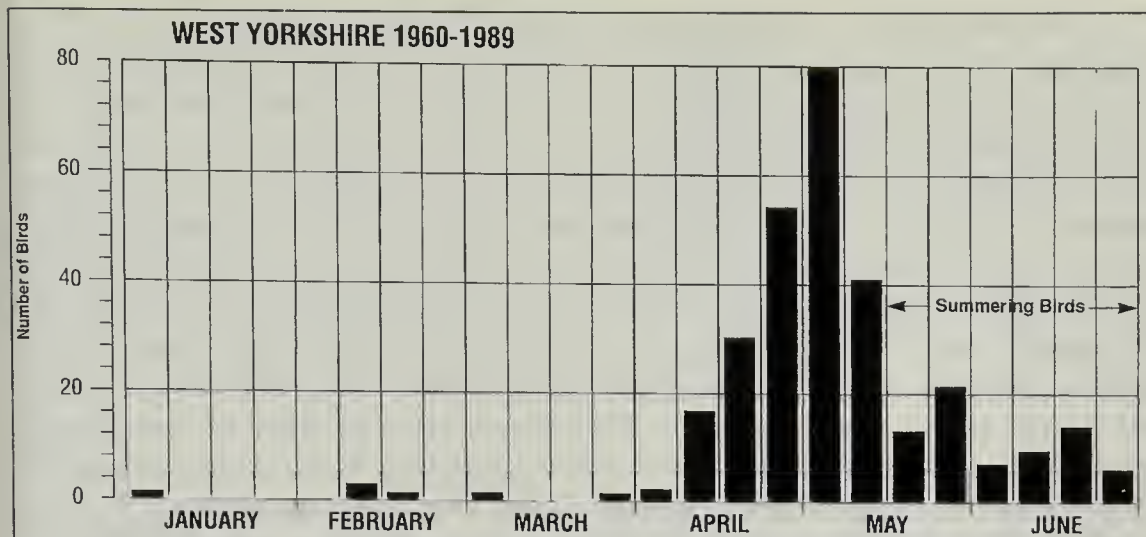


Fig. 5. Numbers of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* recorded in West Yorkshire, 1960-89

Huddersfield and Doncaster, the front broadens and they become more dispersed. This dispersal, coupled with the remoteness of this largely moorland area, where the very many reservoirs and other waters are very rarely watched, makes it likely that many gulls go unrecorded.

At the well-established observation points, such as Fairburn, Swillington Ings, Wath Ings, Winterset Reservoir, Blackmoorfoot Reservoir (see fig. 7) and some others, recording is well organised. There are relatively few spring records every year at each of these localities, but, when added together, they again show a pattern very similar to that in the west Pennines and similar to that at Seaforth (see fig. 5). There are some records of small flocks 'falling in' and staying for brief periods: for example, 12 adults at Swillington, near Leeds, on 15th April 1974, 12 at Blackmoorfoot, near Huddersfield, on 22nd April 1978, and 20 at Treeton, near Sheffield, on 7th May 1980. When all factors are considered, these small numbers are really not less than one would expect from several hundred Little Gulls which left the Seaforth area over a period of several days, flying across some inhospitable terrain and possibly at night.

The location which stands out from the others in this area is Fairburn Ings. In spite of its close proximity to some of the sites mentioned above, the number of Little Gull records is noticeably higher. This could, of course, be due to more intensive watching and recording. Since the early 1950s, there have been some Little Gulls every spring, with more than five together on at least ten occasions. Notable counts have been of 22 on 26th April 1976, 17 on 4th May 1978, and a record 36 on 2nd May 1986. There have, in fact, been more spring-passage Little Gulls recorded at Fairburn than the combined total for the rest of Yorkshire. A considered local explanation for this uniqueness of Fairburn Ings is that there is a passage movement down the Aire Valley. All of these records in West Yorkshire are of gulls arriving from over the Pennines and heading east towards the coast.

It has been noted for many years that the incidence of Little Gulls at these inland locations usually coincides with easterly winds. This coincidence is due to eastward-flying gulls being stalled by the headwinds, rather than gulls being blown in from the east coast.

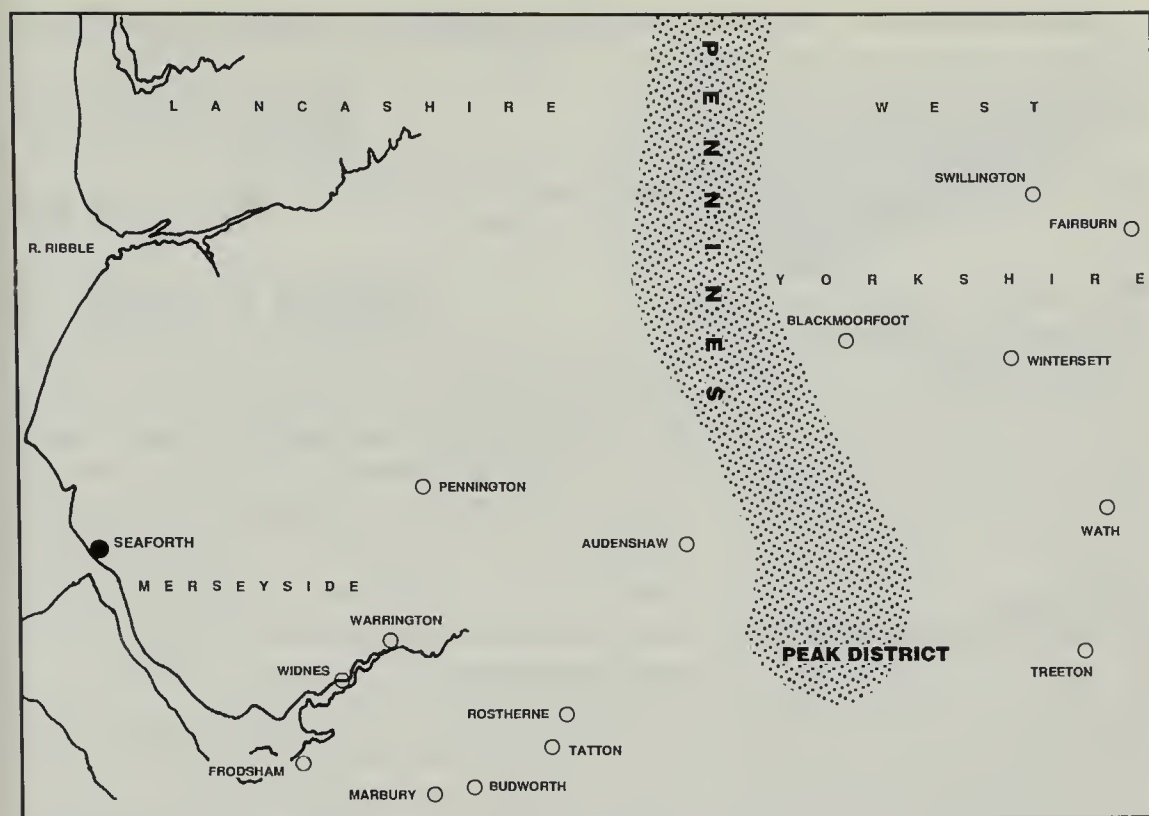


Fig. 7. Locations in Northern England with regular spring records of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* during 1970-89

response to many unpredictable and unknown factors. The manner in which the gulls travel does not allow for more than this vague description of the movement. The 300 and more spring Little Gulls actually recorded crossing West Yorkshire since the 1950s are neither vagrants nor wanderers, but individuals on a well-established passage journey.

Is there another flightline?

It has become increasingly evident that Seaforth is the most important site in Britain for spring passage of Little Gulls. In the area of Tayside in eastern Scotland, however, some occur every spring, and occasionally several hundreds. The extreme variation in numbers recorded in Tayside is almost certainly due in part to a lack of observer coverage. It is in the years with big numbers that the obvious question is asked: where did they come from? As there is no evidence of a movement up the east coast of England, nor of a movement through the Solway or the Clyde, there is the temptation to consider the Seaforth gulls as the source; since there is nothing to indicate the route of the high-flying gulls which leave Seaforth, one is tempted to look towards eastern Scotland. Of course, these spring Little Gulls on Tayside could have wintered in the North Sea, but this is not supported by any conclusive evidence. It certainly leaves scope for much more research.

Acknowledgments

This paper would have been impossible without the assistance of the many Seaforth birdwatchers who have counted many thousands of Little Gulls over the years. I am grateful to Steve White for his many suggestions and comments during the typing (and retyping) of the earlier drafts of this paper, and also to Chris Kehoe for much useful advice and for checking the final draft.

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Thanks are also due to the 50 or so people who took part in the three-year survey of the Northwest Coast, to 'Birdline North West' for sponsoring it, to Bryan Southworth for preparing the histograms, and to Pete Kinsella for drawing the maps.

Summary

Since the 1960s, numbers of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* recorded in spring on the Merseyside coast of Northwest England have increased remarkably. The main passage is between early April and early May, peaking in the second half of April, and represents a movement to Finnish breeding grounds of gulls wintering in the Irish Sea. Inland records of Little Gulls in Northern England support the hypothesis of a regular cross-country passage eastwards across the Pennines and Yorkshire. The origin of Little Gulls which appear in spring in Tayside, eastern Scotland, remains unproven.

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Twenty-five years ago...

In early September 1968 came the first of a run of Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae* which was soon to be described as an 'avalanche'. At least 130-150 were submitted to and accepted by the Rarities Committee, with most in mid September and early October. More Asian rarities would follow . . .

Egypt as a major wintering area of Little Gulls



Peter L. Meininger and Uffe Gjøl Sørensen

One of the most striking results of a survey between December 1989 and June 1990 of all Egyptian wetlands was the unprecedented total of at least 52,769 Little Gulls *Larus minutus* wintering at the Nile Delta lakes (fig. 1) (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 7). The weather in winter was generally good, with no strong winds in the weeks preceding the counts.

On Lake Manzala, 47,316 Little Gulls were counted, mainly during surveys from boats in the central parts of the lake on 7th and 8th January, in large mixed flocks along with 64,540 Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* and 38,741 Whiskered Terns *Chlidonias hybridus*. They were mainly resting on the water and picking insects from the surface in flight. The weather was cloudy and cold, with heavy showers. The Little Gull flocks contained adults, first-winters and second-winters, with adults slightly predominant in the large flocks. Age composition of some small flocks examined varied considerably: one group of 21 consisted only of first-winter individuals, while another held 14 first-winters, two second-winters and 33 adults.

On 14th and 15th January, 3,894 Little Gulls were counted on Lake Burullus, mainly during an aerial survey of the open northwestern part, with smaller numbers in marshes along the southern shore. Again, they were generally in mixed flocks with 13,900 Black-headed Gulls and 4,500 Whiskered Terns. On 15th-18th January, totals of 866 and 643 Little Gulls were counted on Lakes Maryut and Idku, respectively.

Only very small numbers of Little Gulls were seen at sea off Lake Burullus, along the beach at Port Said, in Alexandria harbour and on the saline lakes of El Mahala and Lake Bardawil. Not one was observed at any of the inland wetlands or along the Red Sea, although, on 2nd January, a flock of 22 first-winter and two second-winter individuals was seen flying south low over the Suez Canal, about 50 km north of Suez, indicating that at least some may have reached the Red Sea.

The situation in spring was strikingly different, although only Lake Manzala of the above localities was covered at that season. Between early March and late May, no Little Gulls were seen on this lake, but on 23rd March at least 5,000 were present at sea just west of Port Said, near the El Gamil outlet. The only other spring observations were of two at Lake Qarun on 15th March and on 15th May.

Until recently, the Little Gull was considered a scarce winter visitor to Egypt from mid September to early May, mainly along the Mediterranean

coast (Goodman & Meininger 1989), with maxima of 130 on Lake Idku on 28th January 1978 (Meininger *et al.* 1979) and 260 at Lake Burullus on 7th February 1986 (Meininger & Baha el Din 1986). Winter surveys of the Nile Delta lakes, comparable to that in 1989/90, were made in 1978/79 and 1979/80 (Meininger & Mullié 1981a, b). Although huge numbers of Whiskered Terns were recorded during all three surveys, only 150 Little Gulls were found in 1978/79 and three in 1979/80. Whether the unprecedented numbers of the latter species in 1989/90 represent a recent change in wintering grounds or just an exceptional phenomenon remains to be clarified.

The wintering areas of the East Siberian Little Gull population are unknown, and those of the West Siberian and Northwest Russian and Baltic population imperfectly known (Cramp & Simmons 1983). The species winters essentially offshore (though it is not truly pelagic), mainly along the western seaboard from the Irish Sea and the North Sea southwards to the Atlantic coast of Morocco, in the Mediterranean Sea, to a lesser extent in the Black Sea, and on the southern Caspian Sea. Based on relatively scanty information, Erard (1960) considered the main winter quarters to be in the Mediterranean, particularly at both the western and the eastern ends, with a second area in the North Sea, the English Channel and along the Atlantic coast. In winter, Little Gulls appear inshore in numbers mainly as a result of adverse weather (Hutchinson & Neath 1978).

In the Mediterranean, concentrations of up to 1,300 have been seen off the east coast of Spain (Carrera 1988), while large flocks recorded at Gibraltar during easterly gales suggest important pelagic concentrations east of the Strait of Gibraltar (Finlayson 1992). Parties have been seen moving into coastal

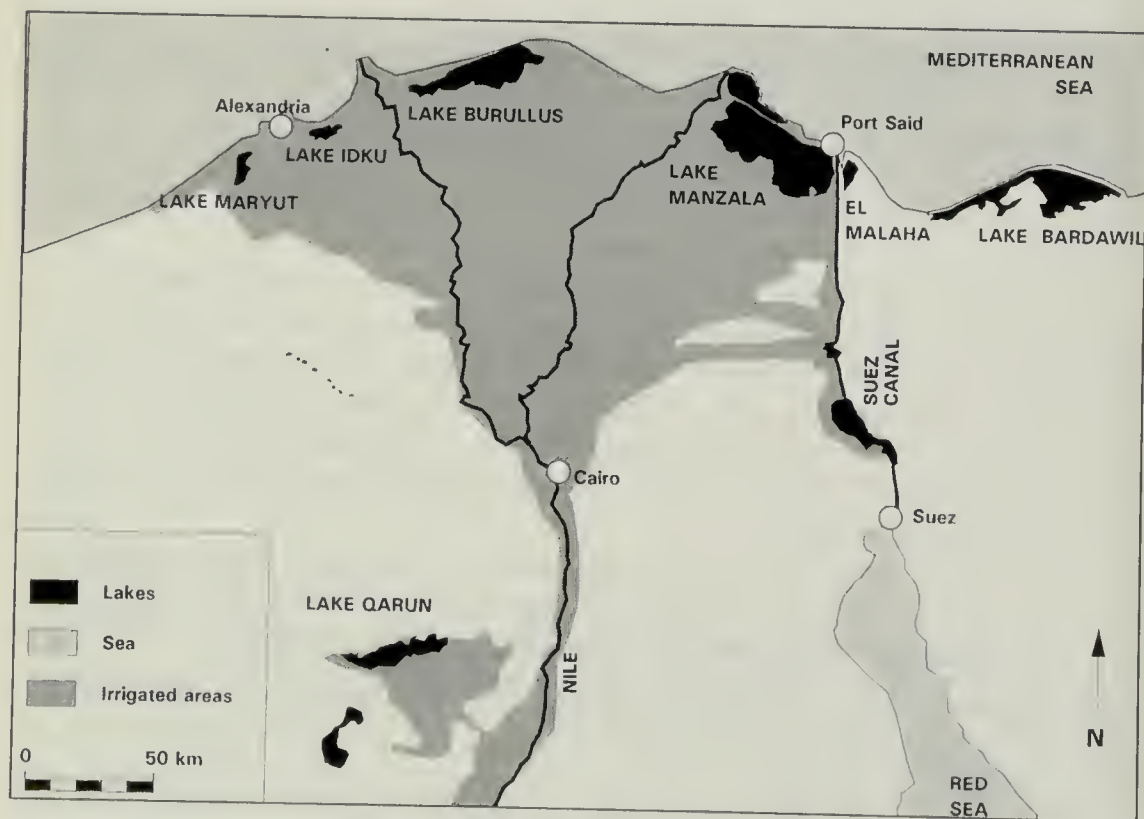


Fig. 1. Location of sites mentioned in text

lagoons in Cyprus during stormy weather in winter, but they do not stay for long (W. R. P. Bourne in Hutchinson & Neath 1978). In January 1953, a large gathering of seabirds scattered over a wide area off Oran, Algeria, included at least several hundred Little Gulls (Bourne 1957), while Bundy (1976) mentioned up to 100 of this species occurring in Tripoli harbour, Libya, highest numbers usually coinciding with rough weather. Winter surveys from various parts of the Mediterranean coastline have so far revealed only remarkably small numbers of Little Gulls (maximum of hundreds): along the coasts of Spain (Isenmann 1976; Bermejo *et al.* 1986), France (Isenmann 1980), Italy (Fasola 1984), Sicily (Iapichino & Massa 1989), Malta (Sultana & Gauci 1982), Turkey (Beaman *et al.* 1975), Lebanon (Kumerloeve 1962), Israel (Paz 1987), Algeria (Jacob 1979) and Morocco (Beaubrun & Thévenot in Bermejo *et al.* 1986).

The previous largest known winter concentration was of 5,000-10,000, along the English Channel coast of Brittany, France, in December 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 68: 347). Apart from in areas off Spain, no large winter gatherings have been reported from the Mediterranean, although, in autumn, large numbers pass through the Bosphorus (Ballance & Lee 1961) and along the Black Sea coast of Romania (van Impe 1969). The northern Black Sea holds big concentrations in both spring and autumn (up to 30,000 in early August), undoubtedly involving many individuals of Asian origin (Zubakin 1990).

The figure of over 52,000 Little Gulls recorded in Egypt in January 1990 appears, therefore, to be the largest number ever recorded anywhere, and shows the eastern Mediterranean to be a wintering area of major importance, at least in some years. Since the species' world population is believed to be only several tens of thousands of breeding pairs, almost exclusively in the former USSR (Zubakin 1990), the Nile Delta lakes must have held a significant proportion of this population in January 1990.

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Summary

In January 1990, during a survey of Egyptian wetlands, a total of 52,769 Little Gulls *Larus minutus* was recorded at the Nile Delta lakes. This is the highest concentration of this species ever recorded anywhere, and also indicates that the eastern Mediterranean may, at least in some years, be a major wintering area for Little Gulls.

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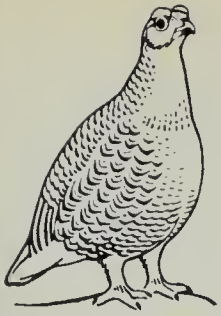
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From the Rarities Committee's files

Yellow-browed Bunting in Orkney The following details were submitted to the Rarities Committee:

SPECIES Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*

PLACE North Ronaldsay, Orkney

DATES 22nd-23rd September 1992

DURATION OF OBSERVATION approx. 1 hour

OBSERVER Peter J. Donnelly

Who first found and identified it? PJD

OTHER OBSERVERS Martin Gray, Ian Jones, K. Wilson, K. Woodbridge, A. Duncan, and about 49 others.

OPTICAL AIDS 10 × 40 BGAT Zeiss W and 20 × 60 Nikon ED

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF SPECIES Nil

EXPERIENCE OF SIMILAR SPECIES Reed *E. schoenichus*, Rustic *E. rustica*, Little Bunting *E. pusilla*

RANGE down to 3 m

PRESENT FOR COMPARISON ALONGSIDE Reed Bunting, Ortolan Bunting *E. hortulana*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY Rob Wilson

WEATHER Wind NE 3, decreasing. Cloud 8 oktas. Light conditions good, up to 400 m. Visibility good. Rain just stopping.

DISCOVERY

The previous night's forecast showed a good stream of northeasterlies far into central Russia (CIS). The weather system already had provided us with 'hors d'oeuvres' in the form of eastern migrants, and there was an air of expectancy on the morning of 22nd September. The dark clouds and heavy rain that hung over the island that day did their best to prevent even the most determined birder from going out. At about 15.00 GMT I had just about given up the chance of getting some birding done, when I noticed a bedraggled Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* sitting on a sheltered window sill. Thoughts immediately came to mind of wading through flocks of windswept migrants. I wasted no more time and shot out.

The skies were heavy and black, but the rain soon slowed down to a fine drizzle. I headed around the back of the house towards Antabreck. The idea that I might find vast numbers of migrants was soon knocked on the head when after about 15 minutes I had nothing other than two Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*. I decided to persevere, heading towards Antabreck's 'tattie patch' roughly central to the island. I thrashed the oatfield just to the west of the 'tattie patch' with little to show, then at about 15.30 I went into the western end of the 'tattie patch'.

As I walked slowly along the drills, there seemed to be a good concentration of Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* and Reed Buntings which flew off ahead of me. I walked farther in when a small bunting with white outer tail feathers flew on to some barbed wire some 5 m away, arousing my suspicions.

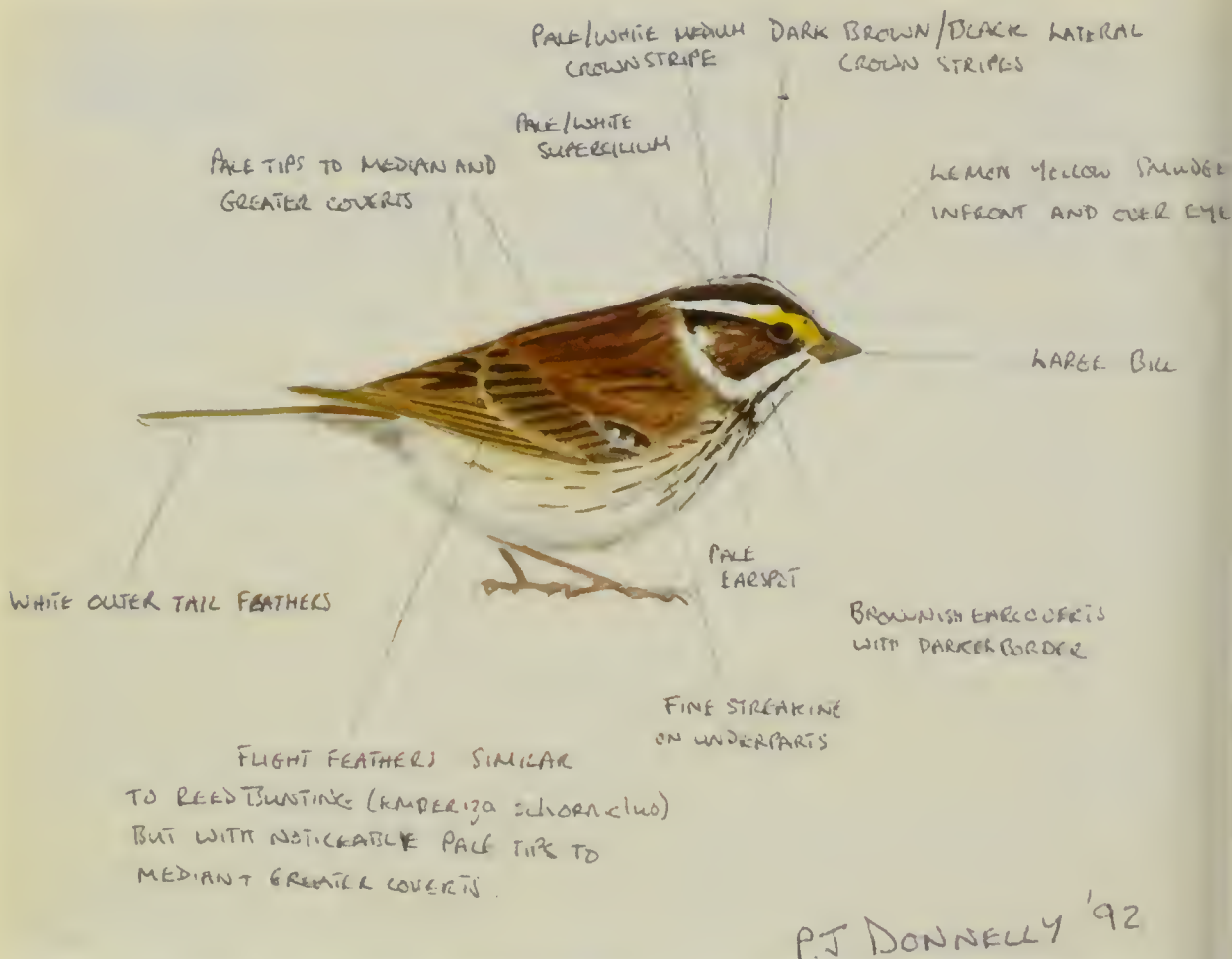


Fig. 1. Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 1992 (Peter J. Donnelly)

I checked through my bins to find to my amazement an *Emberiza*-type bunting with a striking black-and-white head pattern and a smudge of bright lemon-yellow in front of and over the eye. I knew instantly that it was a Yellow-browed Bunting *E. chrysophrys*, the third for Britain! I just stood and watched it perched on the fence as though I had looked Medusa in the eyes. I felt the blood slowly run out of my body and my legs turn to jelly: this Eastern gem was perhaps the most sought-after of all the buntings on the British List and I knew why.

I regained my composure and slowly backed off, keeping my eye on the bird all the time. I knew I could contact Martin Gray and the Bird Observatory at North Manse, the nearest house some 200 m away. Leaving the bird still on the fence, I bolted across to North Manse: Linford Christie eat your heart out!

Fortunately, Martin was in and, after overcoming the initial shock of what I was trying to tell him, he was out of the house doing a good impression of a shire-horse at the gallop (and I thought I could run!). When we arrived at the 'tattie patch', I was amazed to see the bird still on the fence and, after an anxious few seconds pointing it out, MG finally saw it. Unfortunately, no sooner had he got his bins on it than it flew some 500 m away. I turned and looked at MG's panic-stricken face. He said that he had no idea what that

was, but that he had never seen one before; but, owing to the brevity of his view, he was unable to detect any yellow on its supercilium.

We both headed off to relocate it when the bird-observatory crews arrived with tripods and arms hanging out of the cars. We searched the immediate area, but were unable to relocate it. After a frantic search and a barrage of questions, Ian Jones shouted out with a cry of delight that he saw the bird heading back to the 'tattie patch'. We all carefully made our way there, and, after patiently waiting, the bird appeared briefly to everybody's delight. Everybody managed to get identifiable views, although not wholly satisfactory, but, with the diminishing light, we decided to wait until the next morning.

We put the word out as soon as possible and decided to meet at first light to relocate the bird. The next morning the bunting gave better views, but never for any length of time, and fortunately remained faithful to the 'tattie patch' for those lucky enough to get to North Ronaldsay that day. An additional bonus of a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* ensured a vast interest, but, unfortunately, the Yellow-browed Bunting was last seen flying south that evening and, although an extensive search was made, it was never relocated.

DESCRIPTION

Initial appearance

Slightly smaller than Reed Bunting, but more bulky, like Rustic Bunting. White outer tail feathers ruling out American sparrows. With the advances of modern field guides, identification obvious.



Fig. 2. Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 1992
(Kester Wilson)

Head

Very striking black lateral crown-stripes. White median crown-stripe not obvious at first. Broad white supercilium with bright lemon-yellow in front of and over the eye; interestingly, this feature was in fact difficult for a lot of people to see. Ear-coverts dark brown with pale ear-spot not easy to see. Black eye-stripe and dark brown/black moustachial stripe giving darker border to ear-coverts. White/pale submoustachial stripe running around ear-coverts. Dark malar stripe running to distinct malar patch. Pale/white throat.

Upperparts

Chestnut upperparts with dark centres on mantle, chestnut not as bright as on Reed Bunting. Tertiaries same colour, with dark 'thumb mark'. Greater coverts: dark centres with chestnut edgings and pale tips. Median coverts: dark centres with pale tips. Median coverts' tips paler than greater coverts' tips. Whole impression giving two faint wing-bars, unlike Reed Bunting. Lesser coverts not seen. White outer tail feathers.

Underparts

Pale white underparts with dark brown/black streaking. Black malar stripe with black malar patch. Streaking fine on breast, becoming bolder on flanks, and some slight buffish wash on flanks.

Bare parts

Large bill pale, with darker culmen. Pale legs horn colour.

A very approachable bird down to a few metres then flying off a short distance. Difficult to find in the stubble owing to its habit of crouching close to the ground. At first when flushed would alight nearby and stay for some time. Very loyal to the area in which it was found. I can't be certain, but at least two of us heard a call slightly higher-pitched than the 'tic' of a Little Bunting. By all accounts, a brighter and better-marked individual than the Fair Isle bird of October 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 530).

PETER J. DONNELLY

Purtabreck, North Ronaldsay, Orkney KW17 2BE

Peter Lansdown (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) has commented as follows: 'Only high-quality rarity-record submissions are chosen for this series, and Peter Donnelly's Yellow-browed Bunting record is no exception. The submission included not only the details which are requested on the front of the Rarities Committee's Record Form, and a full description of the bird, but also some splendid paintings. Furthermore, Yellow-browed Bunting is an extreme rarity. More even than that, however, was provided by Peter's account of his discovery of the bird. His evocative narrative starts with the doom-and-gloom that every hopeful migrant-watcher has experienced, but all of this is blown away as the bird is found. After that, the excitement bursts through and it was refreshing for Rarities Committee members to encounter so much pure enjoyment in a record submission.' EDS



Rarities Committee news and announcements

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P. G. Lansdown and the Rarities Committee

In the last 'Rarities Committee news and announcements' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 299-300), it was stated that the Committee was considering further changes to current practices, and those which have been adopted are detailed below.

Removal of species from Rarities Committee list

The interest in birdwatching in general and in migrants and rarities in particular continues to grow. One result of this is that many species are recorded in Britain more frequently now than, for instance, ten years ago. Some species are not the 'rarities' they used to be, and the Rarities Committee, albeit with a little reluctance, removes species from time to time from its list of species considered. In recent years these have been Common Crane *Grus grus* and Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* at the end of 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 422) and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*, European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* and Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* at the end of 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 411-412).

Now, with effect from the end of 1993, the Committee has decided to make further deletions from its list of species considered. For each species, the Committee's decision was based mainly on the number which occurs annually, though it was influenced in some instances also by the species' comparative ease of identification and record-assessment.

Records of the following species dated up to 31st December 1993 should continue to be submitted to the Rarities Committee, preferably via the local recorder, whilst those dated from 1st January 1994 should be sent only to the appropriate county or regional recorder. The figures in brackets indicate the number of new individuals of each species accepted to date each year during the ten-year period 1982-91. For Ring-necked Duck there are, in addition, a number of long-staying and returning individuals each year.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (16, 7, 11, 22, 8, 17, 24, 25, 26, 8)

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (10, 17, 15, 14, 12, 17, 14, 15, 15, 21)

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (11, 11, 41, 22, 25, 43, 18, 49, 24, 24)

These three species, like those listed earlier, will now be designated 'scarce migrants'. A series of papers entitled 'Scarce migrants in Britain and Ireland', the first one of which was published in December 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 631-635), will collate and analyse all records of such species in Britain and Ireland.

Papers covering the identification problems of Ring-necked Duck, Short-toed Lark and Little Bunting, highlighting pitfalls, will appear in this journal in due course. The Rarities Committee is aware that an additional burden will now fall on county and regional records committees and will be pleased

to continue to consider any particularly difficult or contentious record, at the request of a recorder.

Late submission of records

A major cause of delay between the occurrence of a rarity and the record's acceptance is late submission. With the Rarities Committee's recommendation that records of rarities are submitted via local recorders, the county and regional recorders are in an ideal position at any moment in time to know whether or not a particular record has been submitted. If there is any doubt, an enquiry to the Committee's Secretary will quickly establish the answer.

Steve Piotrowski, Editor of the award-winning *Suffolk Birds 1991* (*Brit. Birds* 85: 299-308), has suggested a system to combat late submission. He has proposed that observers are, in effect, given a three-month deadline from the first appearance of a rarity to submit their written report. If no report has been forthcoming after three months, he considers that recorders should be encouraged to assemble evidence, such as field notes from other observers, photographs, and so on, add to these a completed Rarities Committee Record Form and submit the data to the Committee.

The Committee supports Steve Piotrowski's proposal and suggests that it is adopted by county and regional recorders with immediate effect.

Record-recirculation procedure

Currently, if the first circulation of a record to the Rarities Committee generates nine votes to accept and one vote to pend or reject, the record is recirculated.

The Committee has decided to change its procedure in such circumstances, providing that the single odd vote is not amongst the last three votes registered, thus demonstrating that at least three members have not supported the single stated reason for non-acceptance. In future, such a record will be sent only to the one out-of-step member for reconsideration of his vote. If he decides to change his vote, the record will be deemed accepted; if not, it will be recirculated in the usual manner. We hope that this will speed up the acceptance of several comparatively straightforward records each year.

P. G. Lansdown, 197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG



Rare-bird recording and the Rarities Committee*

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P. G. Lansdown

The basic facts about the Committee have already been published (*Brit. Birds* 80: 487-491). First, however, a little background history.

The journal *British Birds* founded the Committee back in 1959 and has guided it wisely ever since. The optical company Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd has sponsored the Committee for over ten years. The BOU Records Committee, the BTO, the Irish Rare Birds Committee, the Natural History Museum at Tring, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the RSPB all work closely with the Rarities Committee. The biggest acknowledgment of all, however, must go to the county and regional recorders and bird-observatory wardens, and to the *many* observers who contribute to bird recording in this country.

Record submission

Let us begin our examination of the rarity recording system by considering the six essential ingredients of a widely accepted rare-bird record. First and foremost, of course, is the rare bird, though it must be admitted that a common bird, or even no bird at all, has been tried on occasions. There is the observer who finds the bird, *and* the observer who compiles and submits the record; these two are often one and the same. Then there is acceptance of the record by an acknowledged authoritative body, publication of the accepted record, and a permanent archive that allows future access to documentation for research and review purposes. Most observers would agree that the discovery and identification of a national rarity is a birding highlight, and that the observer involved is *fully* deserving of the credit attached to the find. As a consequence, though, there is an understandable reluctance to be seen to submit what is regarded as 'someone else's record'. So, when a finder is forgetful, or shy, or unaware of the system, or extremely busy with other matters, and does *not* submit his or her record, there is normally a considerable delay before a fellow observer, often the local recorder, realises that the record has not been submitted and plucks up the courage to step in and oblige.

For our purposes, however, let us assume that the finder *is* the record submitter. He or she is faced with three decisions: *when* to submit the record, *where* it should be sent, and *what* should be included.

So far as the *when* is concerned, an observer should submit a record as soon

*This paper is a lightly edited transcript of the talk given by the Chairman of the Rarities Committee at the British Trust for Ornithology/'Birding World' Conference held at Swanwick, Derbyshire, during 26th-28th March 1993.

as possible after the observation. Because of report publication dates, a prompt submission is *especially* important for September to December records. It *can* be argued that, in historical terms, speed is unimportant, and certainly thoroughness in the records-vetting procedure must *not* be compromised by publication dates or other outside pressure.

Nevertheless, the Rarities Committee, in common with most observers and recorders, likes to see as many as possible of a single year's records in print together. It must be stressed, however, that a *major* cause of delay between an occurrence of a rarity and its publication is late submission of the record.

The second of the finder's decisions concerns *where* to send the record. In the case of a trapped and ringed rarity, the record should be submitted to the BTO Ringing Office. All other records reach the Committee in one of two ways. One is by direct submission, in which case a copy of the record should be sent to the appropriate county or regional recorder. The other way is *to* that recorder, which is the route preferred by the Rarities Committee.

This latter way also solves a further problem faced by many observers: whether records of a particular species are considered at local or at national level. County and regional recorders are in a position to *know* the answer to this, either from experience or from the Committee's list of species considered.

This list is not static, of course, and from time to time the Committee considers potential deletions and additions. For the sake of consistency, alterations are not frequent. Records of species removed from the list are adjudicated at local level, though this does *not* normally mean a relaxation in the requirement for an observer to provide good documentation.

All rarity records, whether direct submissions *or* arrivals via the BTO or a local recorder, reach the Committee through its Secretary, Mike Rogers.

The finder's third decision concerns the record itself. Those of you who are not involved in record assessment would be surprised – shocked even – at the sometimes *very* poor standard of record submissions.

Copies of the Rarities Committee's record form are available from the Committee and from recorders. If every rarity-record submission contained one of *these* forms, duly completed, it would make record processing considerably easier.

A full description is central to any report, of course. It should include *all* of the characters used in the identification process.

A not uncommon fault is the inclusion of a statement such as 'identified by a combination of bill length and breast pattern'. These features should be *described*, not merely mentioned, though by all means with an explanation of their use in eliminating a confusion species.

If, for some reason, an important element of a bird is not seen, it is *far* better to say, for example, 'leg colour not noted because of long grass' than for the absent leg colour to be queried later in correspondence.

This sort of query can also be rendered unnecessary by the inclusion in a report of the original field notes, or a copy of them. '*What* field notes?', I hear some of you ask. Where *have* all the notebooks and pencils gone? Pocket dictation machines certainly haven't replaced them. They simply do *not* seem to be part of the average birder's equipment. Yet field notes are *so* important, as they describe the bird on view, not some prior image or later reference.

Photographs or transparencies, whether or not taken by the finder, and sketches, regardless of artistic merit, *greatly* improve the Committee's understanding of a report, though they should *not* be considered as substitutes for a good description.

Contrary to some popular beliefs, although an observer's high reputation is an important element in the assessment process, such observers are nevertheless expected to provide cast-iron written evidence of their identification. *No* record is accepted on an observer's good reputation alone.

So, our record submitter, having decided the 'when' *and* the 'where', *and* 'what' to include, sends the record to the county or regional recorder.

Many local bird clubs and societies, especially those in counties or regions which attract a larger-than-average number of rarities, appoint someone *in addition* to the recorder to liaise with the Committee over rare-bird records. For our purposes, however, let us assume that the line of communication is between the recorder and the Rarities Committee.

For each rarity record, the recorder expects from the Committee a thorough assessment and a clear-cut decision on its acceptability. In return, the Committee expects from the recorder an input to each record at submission.

One aspect of this input is a decision as to whether the documentation can be improved to any great degree. For instance, if *more* than *one* observer was involved in a sighting, and the notes received from just *one* observer appear to be inadequate, an effort should be made to obtain a second description. Or if photographs are known to have been taken yet are not included with notes which seem to be inconclusive, *these* should be requested. In short, a recorder should ensure that the paperwork for each record is as complete as possible.

The other way in which the recorder can help the Committee is to include with *every* record a sentence or two about the observer. This is *particularly* useful for single-observer records. The comment can be 'has contributed to the local report for many years and is considered to be totally reliable' or 'inexperienced but keen; this is his first major find' or even 'never heard of this observer'. It is not helpful to wait for a record to be accepted before informing the Committee of the single observer's infamous birding reputation at local level, for example.

Recorders who assist the Committee in these two ways are less likely to suffer delays in the record-assessment process.

A query from the Committee which could have been avoided, either by the greater diligence of the observer or a greater input from the recorder, results in a record's recirculation. Recirculations are obviously time-consuming and cause delays in decision making.

The Committee believes that it ought to be a reasonable assumption that a record submission from a recorder contains *all* of the information that could be pertinent to the record, and that the Committee should be in a position to accept or reject that record *without* feeling the need to enquire after further evidence.

This is *not* the case at present, but the Committee would like to see rarity recording evolve in this direction to the *mutual* benefit of local and national recording.

There will always be *some* recirculations, of course, but let these be for very difficult or marginal records, the merits of which are under discussion, rather than for records which require additional information. Only *rarely* is a recirculation completed in time for publication in the relevant Rarities Report.

Incidentally, it should be pointed out that those bird clubs and societies which circulate rarity records to their own records committees *before* submission to the Rarities Committee obviously have longer to wait, on average, between the appearance of a rare bird and the notification of a decision on the record.

Record assessment

So, our local recorder, having added his or her contribution to the record, now sends it to the Committee's Secretary.

Occasionally, at the discretion of the Secretary, the record may, at this stage, be passed to a *specialist* for expert opinion. This happens most often with records of rare seabirds; such records circulate to the Committee's own Seabirds Advisory Panel.

The *vast majority* of records, however, are circulated by the Secretary directly to the Committee. The records, which, including recirculations, numbered over 1,500 in 1992, are sent by post in batches. Batches vary in content, with up to 15 records in a routine batch, five in a recirculation batch and just *one* if it involves a potential new species for Britain.

Records are passed between members, by post, in a predetermined order which varies from batch to batch.

There are ten voting members, and the Committee feels that this is probably the best number at which to operate. A larger number of members would obviously *increase* record-assessment periods, whilst fewer members would most *certainly* reduce corporate expertise owing to the inevitable loss of specialists in particular fields. It would also erode the regional input created by the deliberately widespread geographical representation amongst members.

The longest-serving voting member retires each year, which ensures that the Committee retains a healthy blend of experience and freshness. The Committee nominates its own candidate to fill this vacancy, and invites further nominations. If any are forthcoming, *all* the county and regional recorders and bird observatories are invited to vote in a democratic postal election.

Before they can vote, however, they must have an understanding of the qualifications required for membership of the Committee.

A widely acknowledged expertise in identification and a proven reliability in the field are prerequisites, of course. Ready access to a large library of bird books, the ability to express one's self clearly and accurately in the English language, and possession of an *inordinate* degree of understanding of human nature, especially where birders are concerned, are all useful factors, though not vital ones.

What *is* vital, however, is the willingness to set aside around a dozen hours of spare time *each* week of *every* year.

One final but extremely important point is that Committee members are *not* employed by *British Birds*. They are unpaid volunteers, just like local

recorders, and thus they retain freedom to comment and vote on records as they wish. Indeed, *BB* has always encouraged the Committee to operate in total independence.

The Secretary, having referenced, prepared and often commented on a record, includes it with other records in a batch which is circulated to the Committee.

Each Committee member studies *all* of the record's documentation, consults reference material if appropriate, reads *all* previous members' comments, writes his own comment and concludes with a vote.

Members' comments vary *greatly* in length. The more difficult records, and those which involve complex identification issues, frequently accumulate *several pages* of informed opinion and detailed discussion.

By contrast, members' votes are clear, one-word messages. 'Accept' means that the Committee member considers that the documentation is sufficient *fully to establish* the identification, to eliminate all alternative species, and to convince a reviewing body in the future. 'Reject' means that these requirements are *not* satisfied, though it is frequently a case of non-proven rather than of a suspected misidentification. 'Pend' means a request for specific additional information to be added to the file and for the record to be recirculated. As mentioned earlier, the number of recirculations could be *considerably* reduced by *greater* involvement at the *right* time from the observer or the recorder. Fewer recirculations means quicker decisions on records and less work for the Committee.

Very occasionally, Committee members vote on the provenance of a particular rare bird, where there is a *suspicion* or a *likelihood* of captive origin. This is *not* an easy task, but it may soon be assisted by a database arising out of a European initiative.

Incidentally, whilst on the subject of Europe, the Rarities Committee fully supports the 'Guidelines for rarities committees' drawn up by European and American representatives and published recently in *Dutch Birding* (15: 31-32) and in *British Birds* (86: 301-302).

Individual members' comments and votes are confidential, and the Committee is of the opinion that this arrangement has the advantage of allowing members to be totally clear and unambiguous on paper.

For a record to be accepted, all *ten* members on first circulation, or at least *nine* on a subsequent circulation, must vote in its favour. The current acceptance rate is about 82%.

Without putting its thoroughness in jeopardy, the Committee works *very* hard to achieve a quick turn-around of records, and there are certain procedures in place to assist this objective. These include a maximum batch-holding period and a system of diverting records around members who are away.

From time to time, however, one or two members encounter problems *outside* their Rarities Committee work, as happened in 1992. Though this is perfectly understandable, it is *not* acceptable, and the Committee now has a system which we hope will enable it to avoid such problems in the future.

It is worth *underlining* here that, recirculations apart, late submission of records is the major factor in the incompleteness of rarities reports. During the

first four months of 1992, for example, 40% of all records circulated to the Committee were over six months old *when submitted*.

A further important factor is simply timing. If a record is accepted in, say, September, the relevant recorder will be informed of the result immediately, though it will not be published in a rarities report for another *year*. It is both improper *and* irresponsible to criticise the Rarities Committee for a delay in acceptance without ascertaining dates for the receipt of the record and the notification of the result to the recorder.

For *each* circulation, when the final Committee member has commented and voted on the records, the batch is returned to the Secretary, who reads the comments on each record and adds up the votes.

Some of these records will require to be recirculated, usually after an enquiry to one of the observers or to the local recorder. As stated earlier, it is intended to reduce such recirculations to an *absolute* minimum.

A firm decision will have been reached on the great majority of the records. A *very* few of these, which involve claims of birds new to Britain and Ireland, are forwarded to the BOURC, with which the Rarities Committee has a close working relationship.

For the remainder, the Committee's decisions are communicated by the Secretary to the county and regional recorders and bird-observatory wardens. In turn, they can notify the observers. *Reasons* for decisions are given, and may be discussed in more detail with the Secretary if so desired.

Details of these records are published in *British Birds* in the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. Some *individual* records feature in greater depth in the series 'From the Rarities Committee's files' and others, notably firsts for Britain and Ireland, are the subjects of short papers. A debt of gratitude is owed to *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd* for its long-standing sponsorship, which enables the Committee to carry out its work and to produce such a substantial and well-illustrated annual report.

Once the details of a record have been published, the record itself, whether accepted *or* rejected, together with all relevant correspondence and the Committee members' comments and votes, is retained *permanently* on file for future reference.

So, our record has travelled from observer to archive, via various interested parties. Perhaps, one day, it will help a researcher to establish a new identification character.

This contribution is part of a session entitled 'The way forward on recording rare and scarce birds'. The way forward is through a *strong* and *vigorous* local recording network in partnership with the *Rarities Committee* and the BOURC. *Everyone*, observers included, must ensure that there is convincing, adequate documentation for *all* published rarity and scarcity records. If this requires adjustments to current practices, then so be it.

The *only* acceptable and, therefore, satisfactory recording system is one in which there is *total confidence* in the written record locally, nationally and internationally. We *have* such a system in Britain, and *central* to that system is the Rarities Committee.

The BOU Records Committee —through a newcomer’s eyes

Tony Marr



Exactly what does the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) do? How does it go about its work? What qualifications do its members have? Why does it take so long to reach decisions? Is it out of touch? And why do we need it, when we already have the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC)?

These are all fair questions, several of which I have myself asked in the past. It seemed to me to be a rather shadowy committee, not given to much publicity, whose operations were conducted in some secrecy, although things have been changing recently. I knew that the Committee's primary function was to confirm each new admission to 'The British List' after the BBRC has satisfied itself that the identification was correct. Moreover, like most birders, I had become well aware from articles and correspondence in several journals that it was involved with the controversial new English names.

One reason for the low profile of the BOURC is probably that many active birders and twitchers—the people who find most rare birds and have a great interest in them—are not members of the BOU. Its current membership is about 2,000, of whom about one-third live outside the United Kingdom. BOURC reports are published in *Ibis*, which is for BOU members. One has to say that it is not the lightest of reading, nor is field identification of birds its highest priority.

Having been a member of the BOURC since May 1992, I should like to offer some answers to the above questions, as seen by a new boy.

Cartoon by M. J. Everett, courtesy of the BOURC

1. BOURC and BBRC—why two committees?

The main difference between the two committees is that the BOURC is concerned principally with assessing details concerning possible new species to the British List, and with maintaining that List, whereas the BBRC assesses the identification details of the much larger number of all records of major rarities. The BBRC and the BOURC jointly consider identification aspects of the records of potential new species, but admittance to the British List depends upon a unanimous decision on identification by the members of the BOURC, who also determine (by a two-thirds majority) how each record is to be categorised.

2. What are the full functions of the BOURC?

It has three official functions:

- i. To maintain the British and Irish List of birds
- ii. To prepare reports for *Ibis* on changes to the List
- iii. To prepare checklists of the birds of Britain and Ireland

As part of the first function, the BOURC examines claims of new species or subspecies; reviews taxonomy and nomenclature (the BOURC was responsible for several recent 'splits' concerning birds on the List); reviews the status of feral birds; and considers English names. The BOURC also examines records of major rarities prior to the first year for which the BBRC assessed rarity records (1958).

The Committee is appointed by, and is accountable in all matters to, the Council of the BOU.

3. How does it go about its work?

The Committee has ten members, including the Chairman and Secretary. Each member of the Committee serves for ten years, with the longest-serving retiring at each May BOU Council meeting. The Chairman and Secretary each serve four years in office, the present ones having started their terms in May 1990.

There are two formal meetings annually, which are minuted to record all decisions and recommendations. The Committee Chairman is an ex-officio member of BOU Council, and represents the Committee at Council meetings.

Most of the Committee's day-to-day work is carried out by postal circulation, as with the BBRC. Records of birds new to Britain are passed to the BOURC by the BBRC after that committee has examined them. A file is prepared by the Committee Secretary, with a summary of the record and the original descriptions. The file also contains comprehensive supporting documentation, including the BBRC comments and conclusions; photocopies of relevant literature; correspondence from independent consultants or specialists; references to captivity and escape likelihood; extracts from journals referring to migration and vagrancy patterns; copies of weather maps; and any other material paperwork. The folder is usually quite bulky, and time-consuming to peruse.

The Committee has a standing consultant on American birds, as Nearctic species form a significant number of the new species to the List.

Records from Ireland are included in BOURC reports and checklists for

completeness of the zoogeographic unit of the British Isles, but Irish records are assessed by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, not by the BOURC.

Records are circulated in a different order each time, so that each member has at times to initiate the comments and voting, thus possibly avoiding being influenced by what others have written and decided. Following two serious postal losses in the early 1980s, Recorded Delivery is used, and records are sent singly. All deliberations and conclusions, except for the final corporate decision, are treated as confidential, although, in my view, a case could be argued for making our comments available to the observers concerned. We should have nothing to hide.

Decisions to accept identification must be unanimous; decisions on categorisation, where the identification is accepted, are by a two-thirds majority. If such a majority on categorisation cannot be achieved, following recirculation if necessary, the record is discussed at the next meeting of the Committee, and may be put into a suitable holding position in Category D (see Appendix 1 for definitions of categories A, B, C and D).

As already outlined, the essential difference between the BBRC and the BOURC is that, where potential first records for Britain are concerned, the former is concerned solely with identification, whereas the latter is concerned not only with identification (not necessarily agreeing with the BBRC!), but also with taxonomy and the origin of the bird. With identification, the record has to be proved beyond all reasonable doubt, on the basis of the evidence submitted, and in most cases the verdict is clear-cut. With origin, such unanimity is less likely, as there are no absolutes: one can rarely be absolutely certain as to where a bird has come from, or how it got here.

The BOU Records Committee has to make a judgment founded on the fullest evidence available, using the wide knowledge and experience of its members and those it consults. In a recent consideration of an American passerine claim for addition to the British List, this evidence included several weeks of weather maps; extracts from American State Bird Reports and journals to illustrate range changes and vagrant occurrences; and photocopies of trade-journal advertisements for the sale of captive birds both in Britain and abroad.

But, however hard we try, we cannot guarantee always to be correct, and, if in doubt, we err on the side of caution. This sometimes means placing a record in Category D as a temporary measure, to await subsequent records or further information. This sometimes infuriates observers who have seen such a bird, and suffer what one of them once described to the Committee as a 'tickectomy'.

4. What qualifications do its members have?

You will appreciate from what I have said in the preceding section that expertise in identification and skill in the field are not the only qualifications required. We are not just about identification, and, to me, it seems important to have a well-balanced range of general international ornithological experience and knowledge, which I believe we have.

Currently, our membership includes a taxonomist/professional museum worker; an avian geneticist; an ornithological librarian; an expert in the wild-

bird trade; several professional ornithologists who include research and bird-protection work among their skills; and keen, experienced, active, amateur birders (I venture to include myself in the last category). The professional ornithologists are all keen and active birders. The Chairman of the BBRC is a BOURC member in an ex-officio (and voting) capacity. (See Appendix 2 for a list of the current membership.)

5. Why does it take so long to reach decisions?

Intrinsically, a postal voting system involving ten people includes potential delay factors, and we try hard to minimise those. But there are more significant reasons for the time some records take to reach a conclusion. These may not be fully appreciated by the observers concerned, who quite understandably regard it as a bureaucratic and perhaps cumbersome intervention by an establishment body, holding up their right to tick the bird.

Some records need one or more consultants' views before circulation, and, if those people are abroad (as they usually are), that takes time before circulation can begin. For most records, examination of museum skins takes place, often to see if it is possible to confirm or determine age, sex and race, since this information can assist in coming to a decision; indeed, it is often essential. Sometimes, skins have to be borrowed from museums, and some records require that a complete reassessment be made of the validity of certain races and their characters.

Some files, for example on a species which looks fit for Category A, may involve the inclusion of any existing Category B or D records with the circulation, for reconsideration. Some records are recirculated at the request of the BBRC; others at the request of the observers, or of Committee members. Where there is disagreement in voting, there will perhaps need to be one or more recirculations.

Conscious of some valid criticism of delay, considerable progress has been made over the last two years to speed up the review and adjudication procedures. It is, however, impracticable to set target turnaround times for records, as each one is different.

6. Is the Committee out of touch?

I think not. Most of our members see many rare birds, especially new ones to the British List (whether out of a sense of duty to the Committee, or for any selfish or personal reason such as to tick them, I would not venture to judge). They travel widely and meet a good cross-section of birders, twitchers and ornithologists, both professional and amateur, between them. I would suggest that they have a good knowledge of the current birding scene.

7. Why do we need the BOURC?

The BOU is the senior ornithological organisation in Britain, having been founded by Professor Alfred Newton FRS in 1858. It is devoted to the advancement of the science of ornithology, and has a respected international influence in academic ornithology. *Ibis* plays a major role in maintaining ornithology as an important branch of zoology worldwide, by publishing the results of ornithological research. It seems entirely appropriate, therefore, that

the BOU should continue to be charged with the duty of maintaining the British List through its Records Committee.

The origins of the BBRC are rather different. Before its formation in 1959, the responsibility for the vetting, acceptance and rejection, and the publication, of rarity records in Britain rested with the individual local bird recorders, and, for extreme rarities, rather haphazardly with the editors of *British Birds*. The BBRC has responsibility for collecting, investigating and applying uniform standards to claimed records of rare birds in England, Scotland and Wales and at sea extending to 200 nautical miles. It publishes annually in one document the essential details of the rarities seen in Britain the previous year. Only records of birds new to Britain are passed on to the BOURC. Publication of those is subject to acceptance by both committees, but it is the detailed investigations into taxonomy, escape likelihood and vagrancy potential which are the BOURC's principal role, as well as a double-check on identification.

Some people have suggested that the BBRC should fulfil all these roles, but I do not see that as being either appropriate or practical. Not appropriate, in view of the historical and organisational situation I have described, and the different functions of each committee as constituted. Not practical, for, although I cannot speak for the members of the BBRC, their present workload is such that I cannot see them welcoming the additional task of investigation which the BOURC currently performs.

To put this practical aspect into context—the BBRC currently considers (including recirculations) an average of about 1,300 records each year, which averages nearly four records for every day of the year, or five per working day. The BOURC's work is rather less intensive—in the period since I joined the Committee, I had initially to deal with records at the rate of about one per week, but this has slowed down as we have reduced the backlog. But, within each record, I have found that there can be several hours of work. Members of the Committee can spend several days on individual records when circumstances demand it.

8. Recent changes

Aware of the gap in communication between the Committee and birders, several important changes have taken place in the last two years.

First, BOURC reports, which used to be published irregularly (averaging one every three years), have been appearing more frequently. While the Thirteenth Report had been in 1988, the Fourteenth was published in April 1991, followed by subsequent reports at six-monthly intervals since then—five in the last two years, and a sixth in preparation. This has been possible to sustain only because of the recent increase in turnaround rate for records.

Secondly, with the blessing of the BOU Council, the BOURC now sends Press releases of routine acceptance decisions to the main birding journals and magazines ahead of publication in *Ibis*. (Complicated decisions, rejections, deletions and taxonomic matters are not Press-released in this manner.) Not all the magazines circulated in this way choose to use the information.

Thirdly, the BOURC now sends advance page-proofs of its *Ibis* reports to the same journals and magazines so that editors may extract information of interest to their readers, rather than having to wait for the reports in *Ibis*.

Fourthly, as a result of a BOURC initiative, comments on BBRC and BOURC decisions are now appended to the official write-ups of new species in *British Birds*.

The BOURC is also preparing a series of short accounts of some recent records which were not accepted. The Reports of the Committee now include details of the files currently being processed. It is worth noting that the BOURC is accused sometimes of holding up records which have never been sent to it to consider.

9. Conclusion

As you will see, considerable progress has been made in publicising the activities of the BOURC, and trying to make it more user-friendly. Great efforts are being made to speed up its adjudication processes. The more we can do to overcome allegations of sloth, indifference, elitism and remoteness, the better it will be for everybody.

In my view, these suggestions are largely unfounded, but I personally believe that we can continue to do more to open up the adjudication process. I welcome the publication of lists of pending rarity decisions, such as those which now appear in some birding journals. In my opinion, a case could be made for adding to such lists the reasons for any undue delay, where these are not too sensitive. I see it to be important that we not only gain the confidence of those who submit records, but also show accountability to them in our activities.

This will be a matter of building upon what has been achieved most recently in accelerating both adjudication and publication arrangements. This has required a lot of effort by the Committee. Since joining, I have been genuinely impressed by the commitment and dedication of the Committee's members; by their fairness and thoroughness; by the range and depth of their knowledge and experience; and, above all, by the determination of the Chairman and Secretary continually to improve our performance.

B. A. E. Marr, 17 Roundhouse Drive, West Perry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 0DJ

Appendix 1. Species categories

- A Species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state in Britain or Ireland at least once since 1st January 1958.
- B Species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state in Britain or Ireland at least once up to 31st December 1957, but have not been recorded subsequently.
- C Species which, although introduced by man, have now established regular feral breeding stock which apparently maintains itself without necessary recourse to further introduction.
- D Species which would otherwise appear in Categories A or B except that (D1) there is a reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a wild state, or (D2) they have certainly arrived with a combination of ship and human assistance, including provision of food and shelter, or (D3) they have only ever been found dead on the tideline; also (D4) species that would otherwise appear in category C except that their feral populations may or may not be self-supporting.

Species in Category D do not form part of the main List. The main object of category D is to collect together the records of species which are not yet full additions, so that these are not overlooked if there are subsequent fully acceptable records. Editors of bird reports are encouraged to include records of species in category D as appendices to their systematic lists.

The species in each category are reviewed annually. Additions and changes of category are detailed in the annual reports of the BOURC.

Appendix 2. BOURC members, 1992-93

Dr Alan Knox (Chairman)

Tim Inskip (Secretary)

Ian Dawson

Peter Lansdown

John Marchant

Tony Marr

John Mather

Dr David Parkin

Richard Porter

Keith Vinicombe

AMERICAN CONSULTANT: Dr Ian Nisbet

ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY: Gwen Bonham

We are delighted to publish this explanation of the workings of the BOURC, which follows similar outlines of the work of the BBRC (by Peter Lansdown, *Brit. Birds* 80: 487-491; 86: 417-422) and of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (by Robert Spence, *Brit. Birds* 85: 117-122).

All the decisions on records taken by the BBRC are totally independent of the Editorial Board of *British Birds*, though the BBRC was created by and is run under the aegis of *British Birds*. Similarly, the decisions on records taken by the BOURC are made independently of the Council of the BOU.

As Tony Marr has explained, there are both historical reasons and practical reasons for having two independent but co-operating committees, with different functions. History should not be an excuse for perpetuating a system that is failing, but in this case we believe that the system is highly successful, producing reliable validation of records, with the decisions being accepted as authoritative by the international ornithological community. Neither *British Birds* nor the BBRC has any aspiration to take over the role of the BOURC, and we believe that the reverse is also the case. We appreciate the need for 'an Upper House' which assesses all aspects of the claims of the rarest species in great detail, as well as dealing with other matters such as taxonomy and feral species. This enables the BBRC to adjudicate on a greater number of rare-bird records than would otherwise be the case. We also appreciate the need for different qualifications for the members of the two committees. It is worth noting, however, that six of the current ten members of the BOURC are former elected members of the BBRC, so are bringing their years of experience in judging rarity records to the specialist body making the final judgments on the rarest of the rare. EDS



Announcement



'Sibes' in Thailand, 1994 Thai artist Kamol Komolaphalin and *BB* Editor Tim Sharrock will again be taking a relaxed look at Siberian winterers (White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* and so on) and Oriental residents (such as this Banded Kingfisher *Lacedo pulchella*) in Thailand, during 13th February to 8th March 1994.

A small, quiet group is essential on narrow forest trails, so numbers are strictly limited, and the emphasis is on prolonged good views of every bird for everyone.

BB subscribers get a 10% reduction on the normal price. For full details, write or phone to David Fisher/Jennifer Thomas, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19

1DF; tel: Sandy (0767) 682969.



Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs

So few photographers take black-and-white photographs nowadays that the Editorial Board decided that this annual selection should be discontinued. No announcement about it was, therefore, published in the December 1992 or January 1993 issues, where notice is usually given of such selections and competitions. Despite this, 46 prints were submitted. These included the four shown here, which the four judges of the Bird Photograph of the Year competition (the entries for which were looked at on the same day) could not resist selecting for publication in *British Birds*. The number of black-and-white photographs may be few these days, but the standard is certainly maintained.

The Common Swift *Apus apus* photographed by Bobby Smith is a composite photograph, the clouds being printed in separately, producing this striking picture (plate 132). The pair of European Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* copulating (plate 133) is also the result of Bobby Smith's work. He described the events as follows: 'The male called the female off the nest as usual, but she would not leave, since the young were hatching. The male kept on calling to her, from close beside my hide. He then landed on the hide and started to call from it. The female still would not leave. The male then came down to the nest and mated with her before flying off. The whole incident was over in a few seconds, so there was no time for a second picture. After the young were dry, the female called to the male, who came in with food, then the female left and the male fed the young and stayed with them until she came back.' Tony Hamblin had set up his hide close to a sapling oak *Quercus* to attempt to photograph a Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* using a tape lure. No cuckoo obliged, but a male Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* was inquisitive and came to the oak, displayed and sang both from the air and from the sapling (plate 134). The nest of the Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, photographed by Kevin Carlson (plate 135), was less than 1 m above the ground, in a small bush. It was photographed from a hide which was introduced over a period of several days.

We greatly welcome receiving black-and-white prints (whether taken as black-and-whites or converted from colour transparencies) for possible publication in *British Birds*.

RJC, DS, JTRS and RT

132. Common Swift *Apus apus*, Dumfries-shire, August 1983 (Bobby Smith) (Hasselblad; 800 mm Zeiss Planar lens; Metz flash heads with infra-red beam; black-and-white print from colour negative; clouds, Ilford FP4)

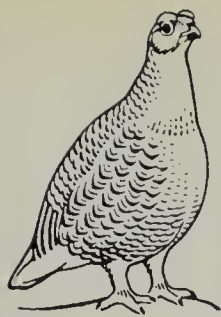
133. European Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* copulating at nest, Dumfries-shire, July 1983 (Bobby Smith) (Hasselblad Metz 60T/1 + meca twin; black-and-white from Ektachrome transparency)

134. Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* singing, Warwickshire, May 1991 (Tony Hamblin) (Canon T90; 500 mm Canon; Ilford XP2)

135. Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* at nest, Cyprus, June 1992 (Kevin Carlson) (Nikon F501 AF; 70-210 mm Nikon; 2 flash heads at f27; Ilford XP2)







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34. Desert Sparrow

There are few good published photographs of the Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*, one of the most attractive, but infrequently reported, members of the genus. It can be rather elusive; for instance, it remained unrecorded in the Sudan, from where it was originally described, for over 50 years. This individual's unusually upright posture highlights its relatively long legs, and shows the characteristic black facial mask and bib that tend to be obscured when the bird crouches in a more normal attitude. Then, the pale grey upperparts and streaked wings blend with the typical background of sand and pebbles, rendering the bird very inconspicuous. This species has also been featured previously in *Dutch Birding* (6: 139-140) and in *British Birds* (83: 195-201).

J. D. SUMMERS-SMITH

Merlewood, The Avenue, Guisborough, Cleveland TS14 8EE

136. Male Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*, Morocco, April 1992 (*Christian Pouteau*). Male adopted this upright posture during courtship display to the female (Nikon F801, 5.6/400 IF-ED, f.8, Kodachrome 64)





Notes

Common Shelduck nesting in open position in barn For several years now, Common Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* have been seen in summer on an inland lake, which is about 450 m from an old farm in Lancashire. No nest had ever been found, but young have been seen in some years.

Despite the lake drying up in 1992, the ducks were still present and amazed me by nesting in an old brick-built barn. This has no doors back or front, and is used for storing silage. In April, while I was collecting hens' eggs for the farmer, one egg obviously different from all others was left in its hollow on a bale of hay 2 m from ground level against the back wall. Eventually, ten were laid, and by 2nd May the duck was sitting very tight, allowing close approach. A hide was easily erected in the bales and photographs taken over the next week (plate 137); then the bird was left until the hatch. Prior to this, the eggs were inspected and the ducklings easily seen through the shells. On the estimated hatch day, the nest was empty, with no trace of shells anywhere. Both adults could be seen on the mud of the dried-up lake, but no ducklings were present.

137. Female Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* approaching nest with eggs in open position on hay bales in barn, Lancashire, May 1992 (Dennis Green)





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(D181)

A few days later, while moving bales, the nest bales were moved. Well below, all ten eggs were found, neatly stored, over 1 m away from the nest bale, in a kind of larder. A rat hole was seen below the nest and a tunnel seen leading upwards through the bale to the nest hollow. The eggs had presumably been removed, one by one, by common rats *Rattus norvegicus* and stored for food.

DENNIS GREEN

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Nesting by Common Shelducks in holes in haystacks or among straw bales is quite frequent, but this instance of an open position (albeit within a building) is unusual. EDS

House Sparrows nesting in cliffs in Scilly On 6th June 1981, in the Isles of Scilly, Cornwall, I watched House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* carrying nesting material into three holes in the earth immediately below the top of the cliff at Pelistry Bay, St Mary's. On 4th June in the following year, I found a similar colony of four occupied nests in the cliff backing Neek of the Pool, on St Martin's. Such holes are lined with grasses, and I have also seen sparrows carrying in feathers. As nesting in sea cliffs appears not to have been reported previously for the House Sparrow, it seems worthwhile to record the details.

Since 1981, I have searched for other colonies in the islands, and so far have found them on St Martin's (five sites), St Mary's (probably eight) and Bryher (two); cliffs on Treseo and St Agnes appear not to be so suitable, and I have not found sparrows sufficiently near to cliffs to suggest that they might be nesting in them (sites on St Mary's and Bryher, however, were previously overlooked). From the many nest holes seen in 1991 at Old Town, between Carn Leh and St Mary's Church, this could be the largest colony in Scilly.

Little is known of the history of these colonies, which are certainly very unusual, if not unique, in Britain. Dr J. D. Summers-Smith (*in litt.*) has seen House Sparrows nesting in earth banks and the sides of road cuttings in, for example, Cyprus and Afghanistan, but never in cliffs over the sea. Since the Isles of Scilly are so frequented by birders, yet the colonies have remained unnoticed, it is possible that similar sites exist elsewhere in Britain. Vivian Jackson, an inhabitant of St Martin's, has informed me (verbally) that sites at Neek of the Pool and at Little Bay have been occupied 'for many years'; the latter site is now (1991) unoccupied, though old holes, some still containing grasses, remain. Outside the breeding season, Mrs V. Allsop (*in litt.*) watched House Sparrows entering holes in the Neek of the Pool site in the autumn of 1990.

House Sparrows will take over the nesting holes of Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*, which have only occasionally been recorded breeding in Scilly. Some years ago, Vivian Jackson drilled holes in the Neek of the Pool cliff in the hope of encouraging them to stay, and these were occupied by House Sparrows, but this does not explain the origin of most of the holes. The most likely explanation is that the sparrows dig the holes themselves. The power of the House Sparrow's bill should not be underestimated: Montagu (1831) noted that Londoners who fixed unglazed delftware pots to the walls of their houses did so for no great love of the birds, 'but to prevent their nesting under the eaves, where they dig out the mortar with their strong bills, when they do not find holes large enough for their accommodation.'

The nests are invariably in soft, black, sandy earth, immediately below the

tops of the low cliffs and preferentially beneath overhanging vegetation, although, where cliff falls have occurred, nests may be exposed. The House Sparrows would have no more difficulty burrowing into this than Tree Sparrows *P. montanus* have in excavating holes in the soft rotten wood of pollarded willows *Salix*.

In March 1961, House Sparrows on Tresco were found to be capable of digging holes in the stems of palm trees in the Abbey Gardens (King 1966), and Vivian Jackson (verbally) has seen the same recently at Middle Town, St Martin's. Dr J. D. Summers-Smith has also drawn my attention to Bourne's (1953) account of a House Sparrow which apparently excavated its own nest site in an ornamental willow in a garden in Sussex in 1947-49.

Tree nests of the conventional kind built by House Sparrows are also found in the Isles of Scilly, where their construction must be a recent innovation. As photographs from the 1870s and 1880s indicate, the islands were then almost totally devoid of trees; the hedges (or 'fences' as they are called locally) of *Escallonia* and other evergreen shrubs were planted as windbreaks for the flower-growing industry, which became increasingly important from the mid 1880s. Nests of this kind are also built by the Spanish Sparrow *P. hispaniolensis* in bushes and trees, including palms, in the southern part of its range (Summers-Smith 1988). As tree nests are more typical of sparrows breeding in warmer regions, is it possible that their prevalence in the Isles of Scilly is a result of the islands' mild climate? Gooders (1971) stated that few House Sparrow nests are placed in trees in the colder parts of the species' range, and then only in those with dense foliage, whereas nesting in open trees is quite common in warmer regions. Tree nests are certainly common in Scilly nowadays, and were very obvious in 1987 after hard frost and snow in January had killed a high proportion of the *Ptilosporum* hedges, allowing the sparrows' untidy nests to stand out like miniature rookeries.

The question remaining is whether the cliff nests are, like the tree nests in Scilly, a recent development, or an ancient one that has escaped notice. Most birdwatchers pay little attention to the House Sparrow and have 'acquired the habit of not looking and not seeing the undesired thing' (Hudson 1908).

I should like to thank Viv Jackson and Mrs Viv Allsop of St Martin's for their observations, and Dr Dennis Summers-Smith for reading and commenting upon my first draft of this note.

R. D. PENHALLURICK

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Campbell & Ferguson-Lees (1972, *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*) noted for the House Sparrow 'occasionally up to 1,000 m or more from buildings, e.g. on Shetland sea cliff (R J Tulloch) . . .', the inference being that this was an isolated instance. *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1976) noted, without details, that 'natural colonies . . . are usually where suitable breeding holes are abundant . . . on cliffs or rock faces.' We welcome details of any observations concerning the excavation of cliff nest holes by sparrows. EDS



Letters

Red Grouse, wagtails, and the classification and English names of birds

It seems unfortunate that the long-established disputes over bird names regularly ignore their primary function, surely to provide simple, clear, concise, consistent identifications. According to the precept at the start of our best national checklist, by E. Hartert, F. C. R. Jourdain, N. F. Ticehurst and H. F. Witherby, the *Hand-list of British Birds* of 1912, which eventually grew into the *Handbook of British Birds*, 'Nomenclature is only "a means, not an end", but without uniformity it is a confusion', and it seems a pity their successors have failed to follow it. Thus, if for example we consider the case of the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* raised by John Parker and so summarily dismissed by Drs Knox & Parkin (*Brit. Birds* 85: 680; 86: 92), this is not actually a new issue, but one considered by, for example, Alfred Newton who concluded in 1896 (*Dictionary of Birds*: 388-394):

'Grouse . . . a word of uncertain origin [footnote—it seems first to occur . . . as "Grows" (at Eltham in 1531), and considering the locality must refer to Black Game] . . . but in common speech applied almost exclusively, when used alone, to (*Lagopus scoticus*) . . . called in English the Red Grouse, but not a century ago almost invariably spoken of as the Moor-fowl or Moor-game . . . It does not naturally occur beyond the limits of the British Islands, and is the only species among birds absolutely peculiar to them. The word "species" may be used advisedly, since the Red Grouse invariably "breeds true", it admits of an easy *diagnosis* [his italics], and it has a definite geographical range; but scarcely any zoologist who looks further into the matter can doubt of its common origin with the Willow-Grouse (*L. lagopus*) . . . that inhabits a subarctic zone . . .

The Red Grouse indeed is rarely or never found away from the heather upon which it chiefly subsists, and with which it is in most men's minds associated; while the Willow-Grouse . . . seems to prefer the shrubby growth of berry-bearing plants . . . that, often thickly interspersed with willows and birches, clothes the higher levels . . . the Willow-Grouse always becomes white in the winter, which the Red Grouse never does; but then we find that in summer there is a considerable resemblance between the two species . . . No distinction can be discovered in their voice, their eggs or their build . . . [While the Red Grouse] is the only species of the genus which does not assume white clothing in winter . . . every [my italics] species of *Lagopus* has its first set of remiges coloured brown . . .'

Thus, in general, compared with the Willow Grouse, the Red Grouse also shows the most fundamental difference that exists between the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* and the Common Crossbill *L. curvirostra*: adaptation for a different food plant. Otherwise, the grouse differ from the crossbills most in two ways: they are easier to tell apart, but have failed to develop an overlap in distribution, so it is impossible to tell how easily they would hybridise. It is entirely a matter of opinion, which makes no difference to the birds, how much importance is given to each consideration, yet because some grouse show minor intermediate characters unlikely to be due to hybridisation, whereas the crossbills, which are much more similar, have not yet been detected hybridising either, we are asked to exchange famous *Lagopus scoticus* as our only endemic species for obscure, zoogeographically similar *Loxia scotica*.

So far, this of course makes little practical difference to anyone except

trendy twitchers (who seem to have caused most of the trouble), compilers of quizzes, and the front cover of *British Birds*. But excessive pedantry could also have more serious consequences. The males of two of our other near-endemic forms with traditional vernacular names, *Motacilla alba yarrellii* and *Motacilla flava flavissima*, are quite easily distinguished in spring from the Continental forms, which are not uncommon on passage, and occasionally breed. Every time one of these is recorded, is it necessary to write tiresome gobbledegook about a 'Pied (or Yellow) Wagtail of the race *yarrellii* (or *flavissima*)'?

It is time that, in addition to our endemic species, we were given back the names of our recognisable races. Perhaps we might sacrifice some of the more unnecessary scientific names to make way for them? W. R. P. BOURNE

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We have no wish to comment on Dr Bourne's opinions on the taxonomic status of the Red Grouse, but must do so on the subject covered in his two final paragraphs.

For more than 15 years, we have avoided the use in *British Birds* of separate English names for races, which had reached extreme proportions some 50 years ago, with every race being given its own English name (see, for example, the Witherby *Handbook*). The 'halfway-house' of a couple of decades ago, with, for instance, Pied Wagtail for *Motacilla alba yarrellii* and White Wagtail for *M. a. alba*, led to statements in popular bird books such as 'There are four species of wagtail in Britain: the Pied, the Yellow, the Grey and the White, and a fifth occurs as a migrant, the Blue-headed'. How confusing to a beginner or non-birdwatcher! We continue to believe that the use of English names should be restricted to species, and that the complicated concept of races is best expressed by the use of scientific trinomials. EDS

English name changes In his review of *Checklist of Birds of Britain and Ireland* (6th edn, 1992), A. R. Dean noted (*Brit. Birds* 85: 615) that 'the 1941 edition of Witherby's "*Handbook*" reveals at least 17 species names no longer in use (e.g. Eversmann's Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Buff-backed Heron *Bubulcus ibis*, and American S stint *Calidris minutilla*).'

In fact (even ignoring numerous minor changes, of hyphenation for example), 40 – not 17 – of the 1941 names were no longer in use in 1992. There were 31 changes between the *Handbook* (1941) and the next BOU checklist (1952), and 35 between the latter and the then current version of the *British Birds* list (1984); in total, there were 53 changes between 1941 and 1984, with some species having three different English names in the three lists (e.g. Common Heron, Heron, Grey Heron; Common Eider, Eider-Duck, Eider), and others changing but then reverting (e.g. White's Thrush to Golden Mountain Thrush to White's Thrush).

Have the current changes gone far enough? It was not until 1952 that *Emberiza citrinella* lost its logical English name of Yellow Bunting. Perhaps that should have been restored.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

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English names of Western Palearctic birds The publication of your *List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* should not be allowed to pass without a word of thanks to those who have laboured so long to produce it. You have had to consider upwards of 900 names, for many of which you have had to find an appropriate adjective to distinguish a familiar bird from its rarer or more distant relatives. This was a laudable undertaking, though not one in which you can expect to please everybody all the time. I do not expect that I am alone in regretting

some of your choices, but I hope I am not alone in being ready to accept them.

There are, however, just two of your 900 or so recommendations from which I must dissent because they are in breach of the rule that you must not transfer a name from one species to another. First, you propose that the newly recognised species, *Puffinus yelkouan*, be called the 'Mediterranean Shearwater'. A new species needs a new name, not a second-hand one. 'Mediterranean Shearwater' is the name used by W. B. Alexander in his *Birds of the Ocean* (1928) and by Witherby in his *Handbook* (1940) for a species then called *Puffinus kuhlii*, but now known as *Calonectris diomedea*, Cory's Shearwater. This is already a most confusing situation, and our confusion will only be compounded if 'Mediterranean Shearwater' reappears as the name of a quite different species. Is there any bar to calling *Puffinus yelkouan*, say, the 'Aegean Shearwater'?

Secondly, I see that you propose to call *Lanius schach* the 'Long-tailed Shrike', despite the fact that there are already two names, 'Black-headed Shrike' and 'Rufous-backed Shrike', under which our accumulated knowledge of this species has been stored. Admittedly, this bird has several distinctive races, not all of which are either black-headed or rufous-backed, so neither name is entirely satisfactory; but is this sufficient justification for giving it yet another name? It is certainly no justification whatever for stealing the long-established English name of the African shrike *Corvinella corvina*, whose interesting life-style is recorded under the name 'Long-tailed Shrike'.

In your editorial, you sound glad to be rid of this job and to be able to 'concentrate on more important matters'. I do not deny that there are more important questions than the standardisation of English bird names, but I would not have you think that the time you have devoted to this subject was wasted. The science of ornithology still derives considerable benefit from the observations of amateur field workers and birdwatchers, whose numbers are in rapid expansion and whose interests are becoming worldwide. They now form an international fraternity—as is shown by the advertisement in your January issue inviting readers of *BB* to join the American Birding Association and receive its newsletter—in which they will find that some familiar birds have unfamiliar names (and the same will be true for American birders who subscribe to *BB*). Of course, this would pose no problem if only we were accustomed to using scientific names, on which there is now virtual transatlantic unanimity. But, unlike the devotees of some other branches of natural history, amateur ornithologists are allergic to scientific names, not only because they are in a language we no longer learn and find difficult to spell and pronounce, but also because we have no confidence in their stability. Take the case of a well-known member of the genus *Turdus*, which, in my first bird book (published in 1919), had the name *musicus*, though that name had already been officially changed to *philomelos*, which is once more this bird's name, after a spell as *ericetorum*. Throughout all these vicissitudes it has remained a Song Thrush, the stability of its English name ensuring that it retained its identity. We would like to think that scientific names have also achieved stability, but who knows what revolutionary changes may yet be in store from the likes of Sibley and Ahlquist? Perhaps we may be forgiven for supposing that stable, standard English names will provide a safe refuge from future taxonomic storms.

J. DUNCAN WOOD

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Following the publication of our list in the January issue we have received a score of letters on this subject, three highly critical and the other 17 mainly congratulatory. We have chosen this letter from an eminent former Assistant Editor of *British Birds* as an example of the latter category.

To answer Duncan Wood's points. First, only a tiny proportion of today's active birdwatchers will have called *Calonectris diomedea* by the name 'Mediterranean Shearwater', which was used for the nominate race of that species (*C. d. borealis* then being called 'North Atlantic Shearwater') only until 1950, the name 'Cory's Shearwater', already used by the American Ornithologists' Union, being adopted by *British Birds* in 1951. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that only those birdwatchers now aged over 60 will ever have used 'Mediterranean Shearwater' for *C. diomedea*. Nice as it is, 'Aegean Shearwater' would be as inappropriate as is 'Balearic Shearwater' for a species with distinct races found at opposite ends of the Mediterranean Sea.

Secondly, *Lanius schach* has been called 'Long-tailed Shrike' by *British Birds* for 16 years, since 1978, and this is also the name used in *BNP* as well as in many standard handbooks or field guides throughout its world range. The African 'Western Long-tailed Shrike' *Corvinella corvina* and 'Eastern Long-tailed Shrike' *C. melanoleuca*, to use their former English names, are now generally known as 'Yellow-billed Shrike' and 'Magpie Shrike', respectively.

We believe that the current transition period may see some of the new English names being adopted more quickly than others, but that stability will be achieved within a few years, and will then be appreciated. It is, after all, only a few years since *Perdix perdix* was 'Partridge' and *Ardea cinerea* was 'Heron', yet most birdwatchers now refer to them both naturally in conversation as 'Grey' whenever confusion with another species is a possibility. The same will be true of 'Northern Gannet' for *Morus bassamus*, 'Northern Wheatear' for *Oenanthe oenanthe*, and the various other new names now adopted for formal use. Thus, we agree with Duncan Wood's final paragraph, and thank him for his welcome comments. EDS

Sacrosanct names In these times of inflamed debate about the sense in changing bird names, it may be interesting to be reminded of the names of the founder of modern zoological nomenclature, Carl von Linné, who, to the English-speaking world, is commonly known as Carl Linnaeus.

Linnaeus's father was Nils Ingvarsson. In those days, Swedish sons took their family name after their father's first name (and daughters theirs after their mother's), adding 'son' (or 'dotter') at the end. A similar system was practised in the other Nordic countries and in Russia. Not much of a nomenclatorial stability: family names changed for each generation.

Linnaeus would have been Carl Nilsson to us if his father had not gone to a university to study physics. Much of the education and communication at the universities was conducted in Latin, and students were required to change or Latinise their family names for practical purposes. Nils Ingvarsson adopted the family name Linnaeus after a large lime tree ('lind' in Swedish) at his family mansion. Thus, young Carl Nilsson became Carl Linnaeus.

Later in life, he was ennobled (in 1761, with four years' retroactivity) and his family name changed once more, to von Linné, which incidentally is the name by which he is known to his countrymen. (Ask a Swede about Linnaeus and you will get a querying face; Linné, or von Linné, rings the bell.) Thus, the names of the very founder of zoological nomenclature demonstrate not only that no names are sacrosanct, but also that different names are currently used for the same person without much harm done.

LARS SVENSSON

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If most Swedes really would not recognise the name Linnaeus, this seems to us to demonstrate exactly the opposite: that there is a distinct advantage in having name standardisation. EDS



Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. vol. VII: flycatchers to shrikes. Edited by S. Cramp & C. M. Perrins. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993. 577 pages; 29 colour plates; numerous line-drawings. ISBN 0-19-857510-6. £75.00.

Volume 7, the penultimate volume of *BWP*, follows hot on the heels of volume 6 (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 127-128). These two volumes were in fact originally scheduled as one (warblers to shrikes) but the amount of material eventually accumulated on the Sylviidae warranted its publication in a separate volume. The current volume now completes the flycatchers to shrikes.

Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, this 'additional' volume is the slimmest one so far, but, at £75 for 577 pages, it is also the most expensive per page. This, however, is a much more manageable size than the distinctly unwieldy volume 5, and a total of ten volumes (rather than eight) would have created a series much easier to manipulate and also placed less strain on the none-too-substantial bindings.

Eleven families are covered in the now familiar format: Old World flycatchers (Muscicapidae), babblers (Timaliidae), long-tailed tits and allies (Aegithalidae), tits (Paridae), nuthatches (Sittidae), wallcreepers (Tichodromadidae), treecreepers (Certhiidae), penduline tits and allies (Remizidae), sunbirds and allies (Nectariniidae), Old World orioles and allies (Oriolidae), and shrikes (Laniidae).

The 45 species texts average 12 pages, but vary from two pages for Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* to 26½ pages for Great Tit *Parus major*. The Paridae have been the focus of a substantial number of intensive and long-term studies, and this is reflected in the balance of the texts: the paragraphs on 'Food' for both Great Tit and Blue Tit *P. caeruleus* extend to six pages, while the text on 'Voice' under Great Tit includes no fewer than 21 sonagrams.

There are 29 colour plates by four artists. Colour work by Kim Franklin and Chris Rose appears in *BWP* for the first time. Plates by Alan Harris now adorn three volumes, while Norman Arlott has contributed plates to four volumes (a feat matched only by D. I. M. Wallace)—a contribution worthy of special note, particularly in view of *BWP*'s archaic habit of consigning artists' names to the introductory acknowledgments rather than placing their names in their rightful place on cover and title page.

In general, the plates are convincing and well executed. I particularly liked Chris Rose's characterful plate of Crested Tits *P. cristatus*. I also welcome Norman Arlott's depiction of 14 individual Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* of eight races, as the illustrations in far too few works cater adequately for geographical variation. This problem used to beset the *L. collurio*/*L. isabellinus* group before Red-backed Shrike and Isabelline Shrike were taxonomically split, and, with some workers (e.g. E. N. Panov) proposing that *L. excubitor* be split into two species (a predominantly northern *excubitor* group and a southern *meridionalis* group), it is pleasing to see a reasonably full range of plumages depicted here.

In one or two cases, the plates are too small to show potentially critical identification features, and this can be a particular problem when these features are also omitted from the 'Field characters' texts. Two examples of this include the 'bottle-shaped' white mark at the base of the primaries of female/non-breeding Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, and the pattern of the large alula feather on Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (see Lars Jonsson's *Birds of Europe* for the level of illustration which these species warrant).

Ian Wallace continues the Herculean task of providing 'Field characters' texts which will meet the requirements of modern birdwatchers, with their ever-rising standards and expectations. For me, Wallace has no peer in selecting apposite adjectives which encompass in a few words

the essence of a species or a species-group. In conveying the general appearance of species to the reader, he has long and distinguished service. In this volume, where the majority of species covered are relatively distinctive, his style works well. See the text on Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* for a classic example. With the few species which are inherently more difficult to identify, a less personal approach is necessary, however, and the reader wishing to review the latest and most reliable identification criteria on, for example, Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Collared Flycatcher or Short-toed Treecreeper will need to look elsewhere. Factual errors seem to be few, though the assertion that underpart scaling on female Isabelline Shrike is particularly significant in the case of nominate *isabellinus* presumably follows from a misprint in my paper on this species, where 'distinct' appeared in place of 'indistinct' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 403; corrected 75: 604).

With the appearance of this volume, completion of *BWP* is now in sight. Despite its problems, the editors have succeeded in producing a work of peerless authority. It goes without saying that, for ornithologists for whom *BWP* has been part of their ornithological development for the past 17 years, volume 7 will be an automatic purchase.

A. R. DEAN

Birds of Prey. By **Nicholas Hammond & Bruce Pearson.** Hamlyn Bird Behaviour Guides, Hamlyn, London, 1993. 160 pages; 66 colour illustrations; 17 black-and-white illustrations; one map. ISBN 0-540-01277-7. £14.99.

The birds of prey featured are European raptors (excluding owls), and they are presented very attractively in this book, which is one of a new series.

The bulk of the text is divided into four chapters, covering feeding, courtship and breeding, aggression and movement. In the treatment of these subjects, Nicholas Hammond attempts to reveal the diversity of behaviour and special adaptations by comparing closely related species or contrasting between families. The text is written in a relaxed and easily read style, and is aimed at readers with little knowledge of the subject. Unfortunately, the occasional unnecessary cliché slips in (e.g. 'Flying is a way of life for all raptors'), inappropriate when many species spend most of the day perched. And it's a pity he had to quote an exceptionally high speed for a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* dive (402 kph) without giving the more likely, and generally accepted, estimate (160–180 kph). The UK distribution of the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* is given incorrectly as (only) the Southwest and Welsh Marches: a strange error.

A gazetteer, and map, gives nearly 200 of the best raptor-watching sites in Europe, the majority culled from *Important Bird Areas in Europe* (ICBP, 1989), with just ten sites listed for the UK.

As well as several typographical errors in the main text and in the gazetteer, and, for Spain, a discrepancy between the site numbers on the map and in the list, the population of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* in Germany is quoted as the largest of any country, and in Spain as Europe's most important population, which, I assume, means the same thing; in one illustration (p.117), a Rough-legged Buzzard *B. lagopus* is identified as a Peregrine Falcon; two tables showing the habitats preferred by each species not only lack farmland as one of the habitats, but also have some missing entries (e.g. Common Buzzard not in deciduous woodland; Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* not in towns; Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonora* not on the coast). All these niggling errors give the impression that the book was rushed into print.

Finally, however, I must mention Bruce Pearson's illustrations, mostly water-colour sketches, which complement the text well and are a sheer delight: full of life and capturing the jizz of each species remarkably well. They greatly add to the appeal of the book which, for my money, is worth buying for them alone.

ROBIN PRYTHERCH

Divers. By **Roy Dennis.** (Colin Baxter Photography, Grantown-on-Spey, 1993. 72 pages. ISBN 0-948661-37-2. Paperback £9.95) Popular account of all five species of diver *Gavia* illustrated with stunning photographs stunningly reproduced, those by Janos Jurka being especially evocative and beautiful. (This book is also being published in the USA with

an American-oriented text, as *Loons* by Voyageur Press.)

JTRS

The New Times Nature Diary. By **Derwent May. Illustrated by Richard Blake.** (Robson Books, London, 1993. 127 pages. ISBN 0-86051-850-7. £10.95) A year's 'nature notes' reprinted from *The Times*. JTRS



More worries for birds of prey

FOR THE MOST PART, our bird-of-prey populations are thriving: the general situation for most species is better than at any time within living memory.

There are several reasons for this healthy state of affairs, not the least of which is the enormous improvement in their public standing which we have seen during the last 20 years or so. That, in turn, is related to our greatly increased knowledge of raptor ecology.

So far, so good, but—as we have noted before—the picture is flawed. Illegal (as well as senseless and unjustifiable) persecution continues, albeit by a minority of diehards, and nests are still robbed of both eggs and young. These problems are bad enough, but a new and particularly insidious trend has emerged over the last year or two which should be of serious concern to all of us.

A small but vociferous minority is calling for various forms of control of some of our bird-of-prey populations, basing their arguments on the notion that, if raptor numbers are increasing, their prey species must be declining. The main target species are Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*.

The most extreme calls for action come in the form of anonymous, scurrilous and widely circulated leaflets which distort (and in some cases invent) population and prey statistics; these appear to emanate from part of the racing-pigeon fraternity. Arguably, some pigeon-fanciers may have a genuine problem, but they should beware of the activities of their lunatic fringe if they want a sympathetic hearing. Elsewhere, we see specious arguments advanced in certain country magazines and national newspapers, or hear them in the House of Lords, frequently from

'country people' and fieldsports enthusiasts who assure us that they are the only ones who know what they are talking about. They either distrust ornithologists and the conservation organisations or dismiss them as 'a bunch of ignorant townies'. The level of their own ignorance is in some cases truly profound. While arguments to counter the anti-raptor propaganda will continue, it seems a pity that in some cases they will always fall on deaf ears.

More Ramsar sites

On the eve of the June meeting of the 5th Ramsar Conference in Kushiro, Japan, there was good news for birds and their conservation as three more areas in England and Wales were formally designated Ramsar sites. International recognition of their wildlife value was given to Hamford Water, Essex; the Lower Derwent Valley, Humberside/North Yorkshire; and Crymlyn Bog, West

Glamorgan. The two English sites were also declared Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the EC Birds Directive. All this represents some more steps in the right direction, but there are still over 100 Ramsar sites awaiting official designation and the Government still has a long way to go before it fulfils all of its international obligations.

BPY Birds Illustrated

Co-operation benefits us all.

The top-quality quarterly magazine *Birds Illustrated* features in its summer 1993 issue (vol. 2, no. 3) not only Alan Williams's award-winning photograph of the Essex Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (*Brit. Birds* 86: plate 65), but also seven other of the short-listed entries: Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* by Bob Glover, Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* by Tony Hamblin, House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* by Ernie Janes, Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* by Mark Hamblin, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* by R. J. C. Blewitt, Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* by Mike Weston and Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* by Edmund Fellowes.

This depiction of the 'strength in depth' of the entries for Bird Photograph of the Year is marvellous publicity for the competition and has given exposure to the work of additional top photographers. *BB* and the sponsors of BPY HarperCollins Publishers and Christopher Helm Publishers are both delighted at this link, which we hope will become annual.

If you want to obtain a back issue of *Birds Illustrated*, send a cheque for £3.50 (£1.00 if overseas) to Birds Illustrated Back Issues, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 9EF.

Swift ID

Most of the latest issue of the bimonthly journal *Dutch Birding* (vol. 15, no. 3, June 1993) is devoted to a paper (by Philip Chantler, illustrated by Gerald Driessens) on identification of the 11 species of Western Palearctic swifts (Common *Apus apus*, Pallid *A. pallidus*, Pacific *A. pacificus*, Alpine *A. melba*, White-rumped *A. caffer*, Little *A. affinis*, Plain *A. unicolor*, African Palm *Cypsiurus parvus*, White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* and Chimney *Chaetura pelagica*), together with their confusion species. The paper is 39 pages in length, with seven colour plates, 14 photographs and numerous drawings, all helpful and relevant.

Copies of this issue can be obtained for NLG10.00 (incl. p&p) by paying this into Dutch giro account 01-50-697 in the name of Dutch Birding Association, Amsterdam, or by sending NLG10.00 in cash to DBA, Postbus 75611, 1070 AP Amsterdam, Netherlands.

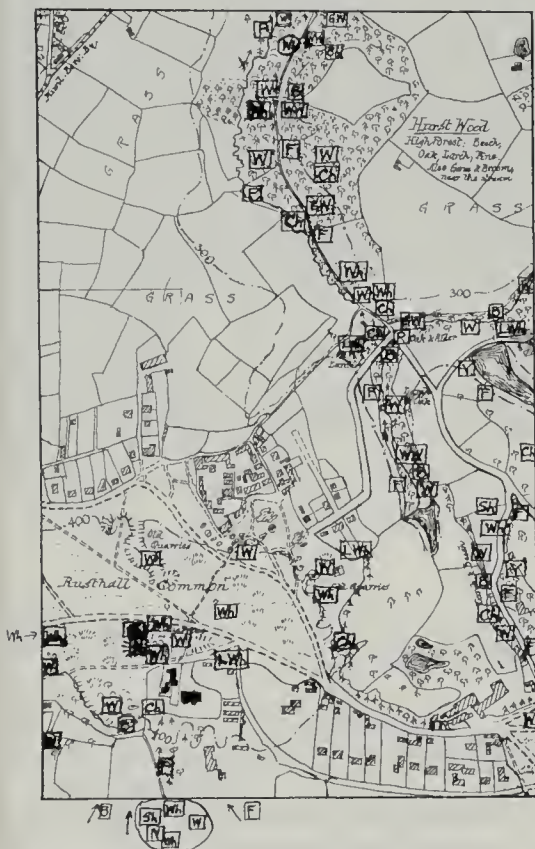
Rare breeding birds

Observers with information on rare breeding birds in Britain are requested to send full details *now* to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA19 7UN). *Please do not wait until the end of the year.*

A breath of the past

We owe many thanks to Antony Witherby who has recently passed to us, for safe keeping, an archive of photographs, drawings and other items dating from the days (June 1907 to March 1973) when *BB* was published by H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd.

This fascinating collection includes, for instance, the map by C. J. & H. G. Alexander showing the distribution of breeding birds around Tunbridge Wells in summer 1907 (the precursor of the modern CBC), which was redrawn neatly for publication in *British Birds* (2: 325). Now, we show here HGA's original map, an ornithohistorical milestone.



REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—*Northeast*

Dave Holman—*East Anglia*

Anthony McGeehan—*Northern
Ireland*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Alan Richards—*Midlands*

Dr Kenny Taylor—*Scotland*

David Tomlinson—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

Keith Vinicombe—*Southwest*

Oil Licensing Round disappointment

The RSPB was quick to castigate the Government when, in a joint move with Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature, it criticised the announcement in June of the results of the 14th Offshore Licensing Round for oil and gas exploration. Both the statutory and the voluntary conservation organisations advised against licensing in sensitive areas of high wildlife value, only to see exploration licences granted in parts of Cardigan Bay, the North Channel (between Orkney and Shetland), the Moray Firth, the English Channel and the Solway Firth.

New YOC awards scheme

The project guide *Wildlife Action Awards* (price £1 from the Young Ornithologists' Club, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL) provides young people with 35 different ideas for conservation activities. The new scheme involves gaining points from completed projects towards bronze, silver and gold Wildlife Action Awards, with outstanding winners qualifying for entry to the RSPB Young Conservationist of the Year Award.

VII Bedfordshire Bird Conference

Not surprising if you can't remember numbers I to VI: they were in 1949-54. This time, the Bedfordshire Bird Club is holding an all-day meeting at Silsoe Agricultural College on 13th November 1993. The programme includes a talk on the history of *BB* by Rob Hume. The cost is £10 per person (cheques payable to Bedfordshire Natural History Society), including coffee, buffet lunch and tea, and please also send a SAE for directions and programme details. Write to Paul Trodd, 17 Northall Road, Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire LU6 2DQ.

Carved birds

An exhibition of original carvings of birds by East of England artists is being held at Penshorpe Waterfowl Park, Fakenham, Norfolk, during 1st-3rd October 1993. For further details, contact the organiser, Mrs Judith Nicoll, 18 Ditton Court Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 7HG.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon

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The white bird in July (plate 115) was named as:

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (87%), Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* (6%), Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (4%), Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* (2%), Kitiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (1%) and Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* (<1%).

It was an Ivory Gull, photographed in Svalbard in July 1991 by Wendy Dickson (SCORE 13).

138. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149); eighth stage: photo no. 87. Identify the species. Send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th October 1993



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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers the period 20th July to 15th August 1993

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 11th August.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Build-up of at least 100 from second half of July, including at least 17 on the Teign Estuary (Devon) and nine on Thorney Island (West Sussex).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Cliffe Marshes (Kent), 21st July to 13th August.

Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* Two, Douglas Estuary (Co. Cork), 24th July.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Eigg (Highland), 20th July.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* Burnham Norton (Norfolk), 25th July; Howth Head (Co. Dublin), 9th August (flying in morning, picked up exhausted in afternoon, died in evening; second Irish record, first was in October 1913).

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), at least 13th-14th August.

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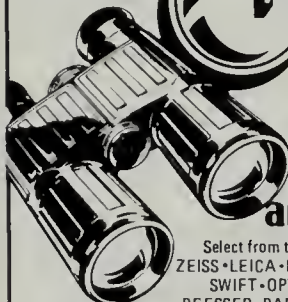
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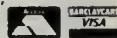
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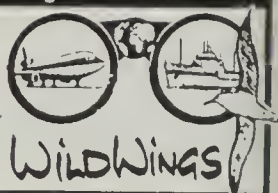


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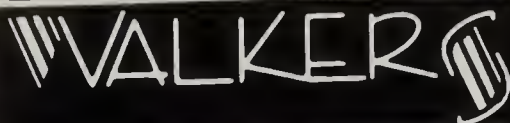
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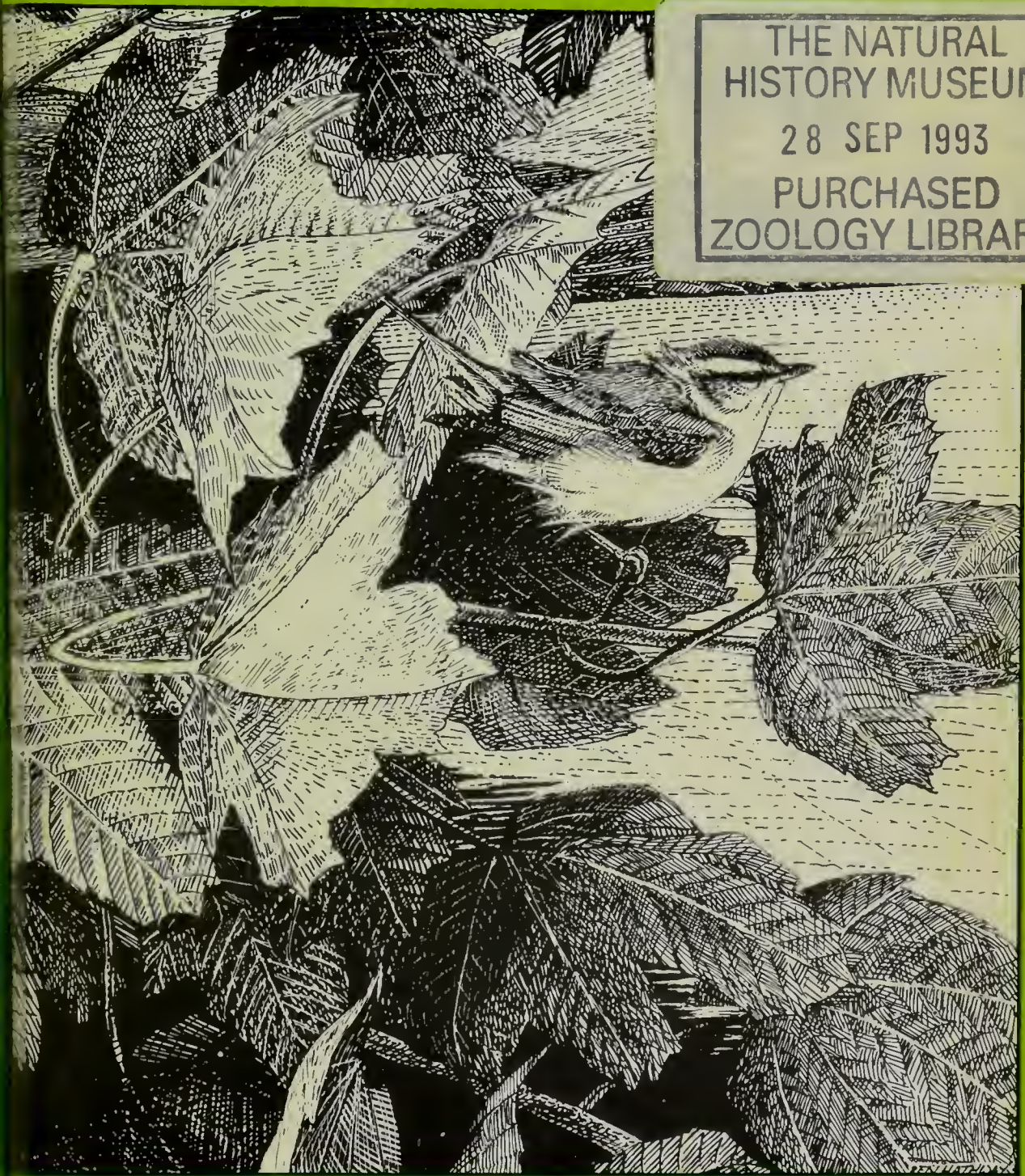
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Front cover: Wood Pigeons (*Jim Lye*); the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 24.8 × 27.75 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 28 in January issue for procedure)

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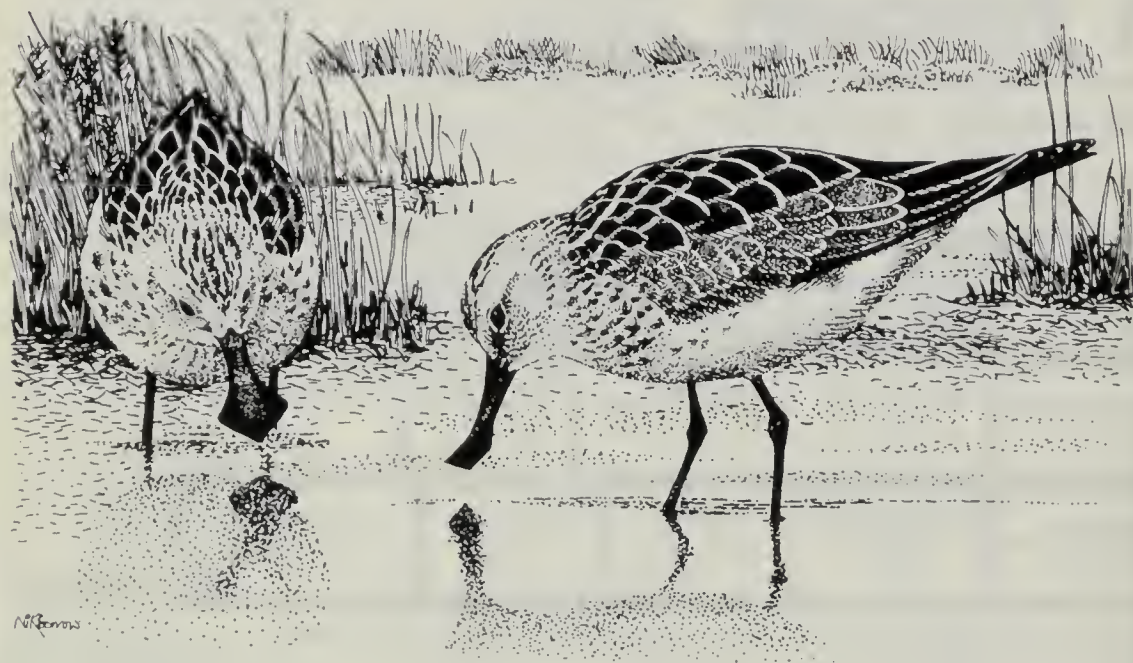
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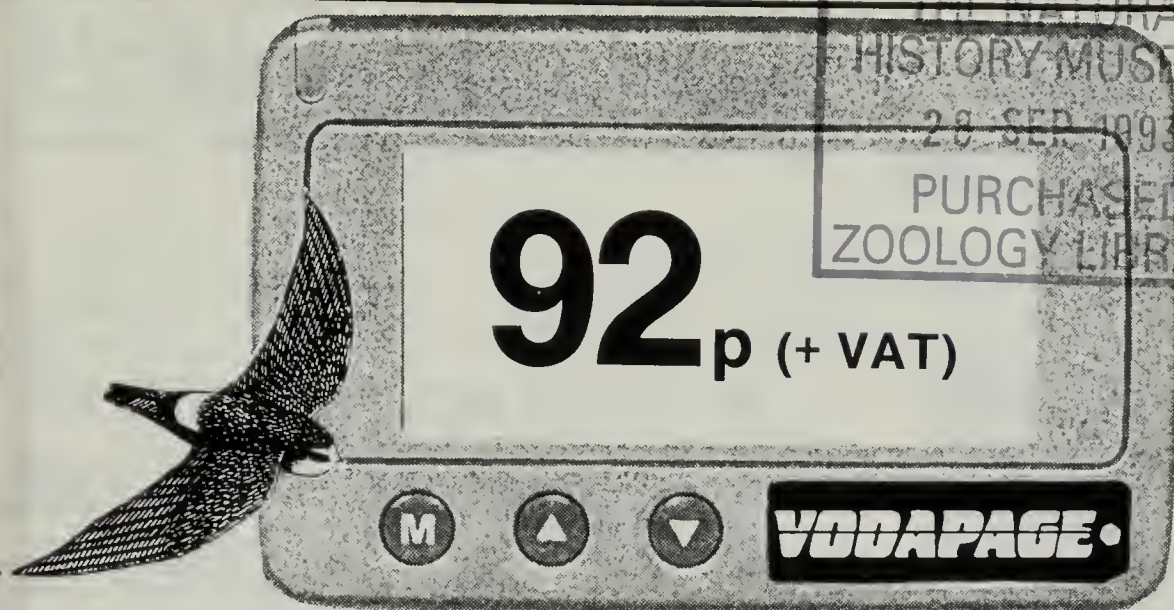
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1992

Sponsored by



*Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee
with comments by Colin Bradshaw and Peter Clement*

This is the Rarities Committee's thirty-fifth annual report, and the Committee wishes to express its sincere appreciation of the eleventh consecutive year of sponsorship of its work by *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd.*

Rarities Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover of *British Birds* each month, and on the back of the title page in each volume. Points of interest arising mainly from the Committee's annual meeting in April 1993 have been published already in 'Rarities Committee news and announcements' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 299-300, 415-416), including several proposals which, for many records, will result in a shortening of the time between the occurrence of the bird and a decision on the record. Details of the Committee's constitution and operation have been published in 'Rare birds: the work of the British Birds Rarities Committee' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 487-491) and further details, together with the Committee's views on recording rarities, have been published in 'Rare-bird recording and the Rarities Committee' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 417-422). A fact sheet about the Committee, its list of species considered and copies of its record form (which should be used, or its format followed, when submitting reports) may be obtained from the Secretary, Michael J. Rogers, whose address is at the end of this report (please enclose a suitable stamped addressed envelope).

All records of any species on the Committee's list should be sent to the Secretary, preferably through the appropriate county or regional recorder or, in the case of a trapped and ringed rarity, via the BTO Ringing Unit.

1992 and earlier years

The Committee has already processed 751 records for 1992, 82% of which have been accepted. There are two records for 1992 still in circulation, 23 awaiting further information concerning the occurrence or comments from recorders or experts on the species, and 63 which were received too late for assessment for inclusion in this report. Excluding a number of records of

acknowledged difficult species and subspecies, such as South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccommicki*, Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* and Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus yakutensis*, a total of 66 records for 1991 and earlier years is still outstanding: nine of these are under active consideration, whilst the remaining 57 are awaiting the results of further enquiries.

During the past year, with the exception of a few records which require to be recirculated, the Rarities Committee completed its reviews of the records of American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva*, Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* and Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*. The results of these reviews will be published in due course. The Committee is currently engaged upon reviews of the records of Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* and Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*.

Records which involve birds new to Britain are always of great interest. They are considered, in turn, by the British Birds Rarities Committee and by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, and it is the latter which makes the decisions on categorisation and taxonomy. This report contains a number of such highlights: Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* (at Charlton's Pond, Billingham, Cleveland, from January to April 1989), Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (on Calf of Man, Isle of Man, in October and November 1989), Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* (on Lundy, Devon, in April 1987) and Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* (on Islay, Strathclyde, in April 1988) have been added to Category A of the British and Irish List; Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (at Skerryvore Lighthouse, Strathclyde, in June 1985 and at Moel-y-gest, Gwynedd, in June 1987) and Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (at Landguard Point, Suffolk, in June and July 1981) have been upgraded from Category D to Category A; 'Two-barred Warbler' *Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus* (on Gugh, Seilly, in October 1987) has been added to Category A as a race of Greenish Warbler; and Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (at various localities in mid Wales from November 1977 to February 1978) and Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (at Noss, Shetland, in June 1985) have been added to Category D.

Acknowledgments

The Committee wishes to record its most sincere gratitude to all observers and county and regional recorders, bird observatory wardens and reserve wardens and their committees for their continued co-operation, upon which the day-to-day work of the Rarities Committee and this report's accuracy and completeness are entirely dependent. Special thanks are due also to the Irish Rare Birds Committee and its Secretary, Patrick Smiddy, for permission to include in this report all accepted records of rare birds in Ireland. The details, included in this report under the separate heading IRELAND, are published in the form supplied and relate wholly to records which have been assessed by the IRBC. This much-appreciated and long-standing co-operation allows the presentation of a complete review of all rare-bird records and running totals of all rare species in the geographical unit of Britain and Ireland.

The Rarities Committee is indebted to many individuals and organisations for assistance during the past year. Once again (for the sixteenth time), Mike Rogers has compiled the main body of the report. The species comments have been written jointly by Dr Colin Bradshaw (non-passerines) and Peter Clement (passerines), and the running totals for each species have been compiled by Peter Fraser and John Ryan, both teams remaining unchanged since last year. The Seabirds Advisory Panel, whose members are Peter Colston, Bill Curtis, Jim Enticott, Steve Madge and Tony Marr, continue to provide the Committee with specialist advice, as have Dr Bill Bourne, David Brewer, James Ferguson-Lees, Dick Forsman, Lars Jonsson, Barbara Massey,

Urban Olsson, Prof. Eugeny Panov and Richard Ranft. The British Library of Wildlife Sounds, the BTO, the Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, Rare Bird News, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, the RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Zoological Museum at Tring have liaised over various matters.

The Committee continues to encourage the submission of photographs and transparencies with rarity records, though not as substitutes for the written record, and thanks all photographers who have sent pictures of rarities, a selection of which enhances this report. Next month's issue of *British Birds* will feature 'The Carl Zeiss Award', which will be presented to the photographer who has supplied to the Rarities Committee 'the most helpful, interesting and instructive' photograph or transparency of a rarity, taken in the field or in the hand in Britain (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 589 for the full rules). The Committee is grateful also to those observers who included drawings of rarities in their record submissions; some of these are included in this report. PGL

Highlights

The year 1992 was characterised by the occurrence of a number of extreme vagrants, some exceptional spring influxes of several species and yet also by some long quiet periods and a general lack of vagrants from the west.

Both winter periods were noteworthy mainly for the reappearance of returning birds and the long stay of several regulars, with no marked incursions of any wildfowl, gulls or northern finches, the **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni* resorting to their more usual haunts of the Northern Isles. The most unusual bird of January was a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* at Spurn (Humberside), while three white **Gyr Falcons** *Falco rusticolus* in the North and Northwest were typically elusive, in contrast to the two wintering male **Pine Buntings** *Emberiza leucocephalos*. The almost simultaneous arrival of a **Rustic Bunting** *E. rustica* and a **Pine Grosbeak** *Pinicola enucleator* in late March possibly suggests that both had wintered somewhere in western Europe. April proved unremarkable except for a **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* and the first of three spring **Little Bitterns** *Ixobrychus minutus*, although 'old faithfuls' like the **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris* and **Ancient Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus antiquus* returned to their favoured colonies, though only briefly. An incursion of **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis* into northwest Europe saw at least 18 reach Britain: how many more went undetected? Other southern herons were scarce, but a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* and two new **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* were noteworthy. As May progressed, and particularly after a hot airstream from southeast Europe finally reached Britain on 13th, so the number and variety of vagrants from origins south, east and even west seemed to grow daily. Expected southern overshoots included a few (duplicated?) **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba*, ten **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica*, four **Great Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, eight **Short-toed Larks**, two **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus*, both in the Northwest, over 20 **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans*, most in the Northern Isles but including three in Ireland, and, exceptionally, five **Sardinian Warblers** *S. melanocephala*. Surprisingly, eastern waders (three **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis*, three **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* and one **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*) were outnumbered by Nearctic waders (presumably heading north), with three **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica*, three **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla*, seven **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, all probably leftovers from autumn 1991. Three

species then dominated the May scene by sheer weight of numbers: **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* arrived in two main waves, with about eight during 14th-17th and 20 during 21st-31st, split mainly between Norfolk and the Northern Isles; **Red-footed Falcons** *F. vespertinus* were more widespread, but Norfolk and Kent took the lion's share of a record spring total which was apparently at least 107 individuals; and **White-winged Black Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus*, that most beautiful of the marsh terns, occurred en masse, with at least 16 during 18th-19th and five more around the same period, in marked contrast to which it was a blank year for **Whiskered Tern** *C. hybridus*. Extreme vagrants then seemed to occur in four areas: East Anglia, Yorkshire, St Kilda and the Northern Isles.

A male **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* on St Kilda preceded a live **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* at the latter site and Britain's second **Marmora's Warbler** *S. sarda* together with a singing **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* at Spurn, while in East Anglia a singing **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* and a **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* appeared from opposite directions. Typically, Fair Isle struck back, with a multiple arrival of **Black-headed Buntings** *Emberiza melanocephala* and a **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*. Amongst all this action were an unprecedented number of **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, a **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* in Highland and two more singing **Booted Warblers**, but there were only two **Thrush Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia*, despite the high totals of **Common Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* and **Marsh Warblers** *A. palustris*.

Two or three **Great White Egrets** *Egretta alba* wandered around during July and August, and a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* and a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* were fairly normal occurrences. Tern-watchers located a **Forster's** *Sterna forsteri* and two **Gull-billed** *Gelochelidon nilotica*, whilst the **Lesser Crested** *S. bengalensis* raised another problematic hybrid. In a poor autumn for passage waders, three **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* suggested that we may have a returning pool of adults. There was a **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* in Essex and then Kent, and Norfolk continued its purple run with Britain's second **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis*. Other August highlights were the first non-adult-male and mainland **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli*, a tape-lured **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* and a single **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*. One of the major features of the autumn was the lack of Nearctic waders, wildfowl and landbirds, and it was thus astonishing that, of the three Nearctic wood-warblers to appear, two were extreme vagrants and both relatively early: Britain's third **Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia* in August and Britain's second **Hooded Warbler** *Wilsonia citrina* in early September, the latter being another major bird for St Kilda. Along with them in the early westerly flow came most of the rather few western waders of the autumn—including a juvenile **Solitary Sandpiper** *T. solitaria* on Fair Isle—and a **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* at the other end of the country. A **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* and a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* completed the October crop from the west. From the east came another influx of **White-winged Black Terns**, and a simultaneous arrival of four **Yellow-breasted Buntings**

Emberiza aureola was unusual only in its far-flung distribution. September and early October were dominated by eastern vagrants in the Northern Isles, but, despite the presence of such headline-catching species as **Yellow-browed Bunting** *E. chrysophrys* (Britain's third), **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*, and **Siberian Zoothera** *Zoothera sibirica*, **Eyebrowed** *Turdus obscurus* and **Dark-throated Thrushes** *T. ruficollis*, the totals of most species were unexceptional, with just one **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi*, two **Lanceolated Warblers** *L. lanceolata* and only three **Radde's Warblers** *Phylloscopus schwarzi*. There were, however, 13 **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus* and, with cold, northerly winds cutting off the supply of eastern vagrants, only the increasingly regular **Olive-backed Pipits** *A. hodgsoni* and 'Siberian' **Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata maura/stejnegeri* came through in any strength later in October. Other notables included **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* (but no **Desert Wheatears** *O. deserti* in 1992), **Isabelline Wheatear** *O. isabellina*, **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni*, a fine total of six **Bonelli's Warblers** *P. bonelli*, a **Paddyfield Warbler** and a **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana*, all species apparently on the increase. From mid October onwards, however, avian vagrancy generally died a death, and it was left to the Neartie to produce the last trump cards: two more **Pied-billed Grebes**, a new **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* and the second **White-throated Sparrow** of the year, all except the duck remaining to winter at their chosen haunts.

GPC

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1991 report (85: 507-554). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

(i) The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if photographed or tape-recorded (and this evidence seen or heard by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), up to three in number, in alphabetical order.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, English names and specific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* (1993). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in brackets after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain and Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (1) to the end of 1957, (2) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult and rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in totals), or 'the same' when the evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is

applied to records of the same species recurring at the same locality after a lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or a nearby site. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee usually requires firm evidence before more than one is counted in the totals. A detailed breakdown of the fig-

ures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.

(v) Irish records, assessed and accepted by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, are included separately, following the subheading IRELAND.

(vi) The world range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 130, 2)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 28th April (M. Gray *et al.*).

Shetland Fetlar, adult, 28th December (H. R. Harrop, M. Heubeck, R. J. Tulloch).

1991 Lothian Gosford Bay, Aberlady and Gullane Bay area, at least one first-summer, 31st July to September, two, 25th-30th August (*Brit. Birds* 85: 510), singles, 8th September (A. Brown), 16th (F. D. Hamilton), 25th (J. McOwat).

1991 At sea Sea area Thames, 50° 81' N 01° 55' E, about 6 km east of Ramsgate, Kent, 15th December (J. H. van der Dol, R. H. Lawrence *et al.*).

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) A year returning to the pattern of more northerly records as befits this Arctic species. The ones summering in Lothian reflect the events of 1987, but fidelity to that site is unlikely to persist as all will be busy with family matters in future summers. Identifying one from a cross-Channel ferry required good teamwork by a good team.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 13, 3)

Cornwall Argal Reservoir, 14th November to 1993 (D. P. Eva *et al.*).

Northumberland Druridge Pools, 26th December to 9th May 1993, photographed (M. Carr, I. Fisher *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Radley Gravel-pit, Abingdon, 26th April to 17th May (N. J. Hallam, M. G. Wilson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 299).

(North and South America) With the best-ever year for this species and all being typical long-stayers, the mystery remains as to why and how this species should be prone to straggling to Europe. It is no more fond of the sea than is the Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, so presumably must make its way here by a succession of short hops via Greenland and Iceland's coastal waters. The larger grebes can sometimes be seen on visible migration travelling with parties of ducks or even auks, but this is a nocturnal migrant. The wide spread of occurrence dates over the years holds no clues and does not suggest that Atlantic weather-patterns have any special relevance.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 26, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, individual last recorded 14th June 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 510), 19th April to 30th June (M. Riddly per D. Suddaby).

1990 At sea Sea area Cromarty, 57° 49' N 02° 50' W, 12.6 km north of Portknockie, Grampian, 5th September, photographed (M. F. Leopold, P. Wolf). Sea area Irish Sea, about 6 km off Strumble Head, Dyfed, 17th September (C. W. Murphy).

(Southern oceans) The Hermaness bird once more returned, but was only sporadic in its appearances. It has been recorded since 1972 with the exception of 1988 and 1989. A report of one from Fife has yet to be studied by this Committee.

Albatross *Diomedea* (3, 44, 1)

IRELAND

The following record of an albatross, though not specifically identified, was considered most likely to have been a Black-browed.

1991 Cork Adult, Dursey Island, 8th October.

The Irish Rare Birds Committee is currently reviewing all Irish albatross records.

Soft-plumaged Petrel superspecies *Pterodroma mollis/madeira/feae* (0, 3, 0)

IRELAND

1990 Cork Cape Clear Island, 26th August.

1991 Down St John's Point, 20th August.

(Pacific, Central and Southern Atlantic, and Southern Indian Oceans).

Petrel *Pterodroma* (1, 5, 0)

IRELAND

1989 Cork Old Head of Kinsale, 14th August.

There is one other Irish record of a *Pterodroma*, off Cape Clear Island, Cork, in September 1974.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 82, 1)

1988 Dyfed Strumble Head, two, 7th October (P. Murray, G. H. Rees).

1989 Northumberland Seaton Sluice, 17th July (M. Hepple, A. Hutt).

1991 Humberside Flamborough Head, 11th September (G. P. Catley, A. Grieve, M. Newsome *et al.*).

IRELAND

1992 Cork Cape Clear Island, 14th August.

The Irish Rare Birds Committee is currently reviewing all Irish Little Shearwater and 'small shearwater' records.

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, southern Pacific and Indian Oceans) Because of the difficulty in providing convincing evidence of identity on paper, Little Shearwaters take a considerable time to be accepted. It is, therefore, not surprising that all the British records in this report refer to birds from earlier years. It seems that many observers have become fixated on use of the terms 'whirring' and 'auk-like' when describing Little Shearwater's flight. It is the view of the Committee that these are excellent terms for describing auks, but are not really referable to Little Shearwater.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 13, 0)

1990 Cumbria South Walney, 9th October (T. Dean).

1990 Dyfed Strumble Head, 6th September (P. Bristow, G. H. Rees *et al.*).

(Southern oceans) Wilson's Storm-petrel is one of the few rewards that come all too infrequently to dedicated watchers from western headlands. The observers of both these birds certainly fall into that category with, collectively, thousands of hours spent seawatching. Identifying a bird such as this is particularly difficult when there is no-one else present with whom to check the features. In view of this, the Walney bird was not only well watched, but also particularly well described.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* (0, 1, 0)

1989 Cleveland Charlton's Pond, Billingham, 11th January to 21st April (T. J. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 82: plates 180-182).

(North America) One of the more underwhelming species added to the British List in the last decade. The finder should be congratulated for not only

suspecting the identification initially but also having the persistence required to get others to this unlikely spot for a British first. It performed well to packed crowds and TV cameras and allowed detailed scrutiny of the differences between it and Great Cormorant *P. carbo*.

Frigatebird *Fregata* (1, 4, 0)

IRELAND

The following record refers to an unidentified frigatebird, most probably a female Magnificent *F. magnificens*.

1989 Dublin Dalkey, 18th June.

(Tropical oceans) The totals include the sole fully accepted bird, a Magnificent of the Caribbean race *rothschildi*, on Tiree, Strathclyde, in 1953.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 165, 3)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, ♂, 25th-26th May (R. Green, K. Murray *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, ♀, 20th April (G. C. & Mrs D. J. S. Stephenson). St Martin's, sex uncertain, 19th May (Miss C. E. Lankester, K. Pellow).

(Western Eurasia, Africa and Australia; winters Africa and southern Asia) These three records are typical in both date and locality, although, as the range of the species contracts in Europe, vagrants are liable to become less frequent. Neither the well-watched individual at Holkham, Norfolk, nor another seen at Fairburn Ings, West Yorkshire, have yet been submitted.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 306, 15)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, second-summer or adult, 4th June (M. A. Bailey, J. M. B. King).

Cambridgeshire Fordham, second-summer, 2nd-3rd June (B. Jellyman, O. Marks, D. Palmer *et al.*).

Cheshire Budworth Mere, first-summer, 16th May (P. M. Hill, J. M. Motushaw *et al.*).

Dorset Radipole, adult, 22nd June (G. B. Barrett *et al.*).

Greater London Feltham, adult, 9th-10th June (F. Chandler, J. & P. Jackson, R. Wells *et al.*).

Hampshire Woodmill, Southampton, juvenile, 15th November to at least 9th February 1993 (D. J. Unsworth *et al.*) (plate 140).

Strathclyde Craigie Park, Ayr, juvenile, 28th August to 11th September (Mrs A. Griffiths, R. H. Hogg *et al.*). Ailsa Craig, Ayr, juvenile, 11th September (B. Zonfrillo). Near Larkhall, Lanark, juvenile, 9th September (J. Douglas).

Suffolk Felixstowe, first-year, late January to 4th March (P. Mason, R. B. Warren *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pulborough Brooks, adult, 8th April (J. M. Paton, J. Reaney, C. J. Walder *et al.*).

Tayside See 1991 Tayside below.

1989 Glamorgan, South Roath Park, Cardiff, juvenile, 26th November to 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 443), to 17th February (per P. Bristow).

1990 Devon Newton St Cyres, adult, 28th-30th March (S. Colombé, T. Willison).

1990 Dyfed Skomer, first-summer, remains of, 27th April (S. J. & Mrs A. C. Sutcliffe, H. A. Williams *et al.*).

1990 Glamorgan, South See 1989 Glamorgan, South, above.

1990 Yorkshire, North Hilla Green Bridge, second-summer, 24th May (G. L. Batten, J. Giggall, C. Sollitt *et al.*).

1990 Yorkshire, West Otley, adult, about 14th July to at least 11th August (A. G. Gough, S. Lovric *et al.*).

1991 Tayside Findatie area, juvenile, 4th November to at least 24th January 1992 (D. E. Dickson, J. Stevenson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 194).

IRELAND

1991 Wexford First-winter, South Slob, 30th November.

1992 Cork Three first-years, Ballymaloc, 17th May, two on 18th and one on 19th May. First-year, Lough Aderry, 19th May.



139. Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Loch Lochy, Highland, June 1990 (G. Carr)



140. Juvenile Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Southampton, Hampshire, December 1992 (Tony Croucher)

141. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Maple Cross, Hertfordshire, May 1992 (R. C. Wilson)



(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas; European population winters in Africa) In 1992, Night Herons made something of a return to their usual recent status, after the dearth in 1991. Records showed a typical spread, with two overwintering, spring overshoots and displaced juveniles in autumn. Although the trio of records of juveniles in Strathclyde could suggest genuine vagrancy, the presence of unringed, free-flying juveniles and adults at the Edinburgh Zoo colony must bring these and the overwintering Tayside bird under suspicion. Whether this dilemma can ever be sorted out is debatable, and many British records could relate to these feral individuals. Perhaps the only logical recourse is to accept as wild all that are seen well enough to ascertain that they are not colour-ringed.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* (0, 3, 0)

(North and Central America, and West Indies) A report of an immature from St Peter Port, Guernsey, in September has yet to be assessed by the Committee.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola valloides* (95, 31, 1)

Cornwall Towednack, 13th-19th May (M. J. Rogers, D. Walsh *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) A single, first noted from the garden of the Committee's Honorary Secretary, seemed a just reward for his having to spend the rest of the spring at the typewriter. It has to be stated that the behaviour of some who came to see it was far from exemplary.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 51, 18)

Cambridgeshire Burwell, two, 20th May (D. Palmer), presumed to come from Welney, Norfolk. See also Norfolk.

Hertfordshire Stockers Lake and Maple Cross area, eight, 3rd-4th May (G. Elton, A. Stride *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 293; 86: plate 141), two presumed to move to Norfolk.

Humberside Messingham, 6th-10th May, photographed (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall, J. T. Harri-man *et al.*).

Kent Stodmarsh, 7th-8th May (D. C. Gilbert *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Near Mablethorpe, four, 7th May (R. J. & Mrs H. Hill, P. Towler), presumed to come from North Yorkshire.

Norfolk Welney, 9th-20th May, five, 9th-15th, two, 18th-20th, all roosted nearby in Cambridgeshire (T. M. Brooks, J. B. Kemp, J. C. Lowen *et al.*), two presumed to visit Burwell, Cambridgeshire, three presumed to come from Suffolk, and two presumed to come from Hertfordshire.

Suffolk Ousden, three, 3rd May, two photographed (E. Cantillon, C. R., N. P. & R. F. Nunn), presumed to move to Welney, Norfolk.

Yorkshire, North Nunnington, five, 6th May, photographed (O. & Mrs J. Turner), four presumed to move to Lincolnshire.

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest breeders in north of France) The fact that the Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Suffolk records came by chance from observant farmers at localities well away from the haunts of birdwatchers suggests that still more may well have featured in this influx. Nonetheless, the Committee felt obliged to adopt a statistically conservative approach to the available data. The four in Lincolnshire had dark legs, whereas all members of the Hertfordshire party were apparently in prime breeding condition. At least one more remains to be reported to the Committee.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (23, 717, -)

1990 Cheshire Rostherne Mere, 1st May (D. A. Clarke, J. P. Day, P. G. H. Wolstenholme), previously not accepted (*Brit. Birds* 85: 553). Neumann's Flash, 6th May (*Brit. Birds* 85: 511), was at Lostock.

1990 Fife Lochore Meadows, 5th June (W. Gilfillan *et al.*), also in Highland.

1990 Highland See above.

1990 Man, Isle of Many localities, at least two, 17th March to 13th May (Dr J. P. Cullen, F. Moore *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia) The task of assessing these gets easier as we know that fewer and fewer back-records will come in each year. The Committee hopes that these admittedly beautiful birds have become so established that they will never become rarities again. There is no doubt, however, that the unexpected discovery of one of these birds away from the South Coast 'hot-spots' will still make many an observer's month, if not year.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 45, 6)

Grampian Ythan Estuary, 10th-15th June, photographed (S. M. & W. G. Johnston *et al.*).

Hampshire Needs Oar Point, 17th July, photographed (J. M. Clark, Dr G. P. Green *et al.*).

Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Stanford Reservoir, 5th-21st July, photographed (S. Tilley, I. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Northumberland Holywell Pond, 4th July (T. R. Cleeves, J. E. Ferguson *et al.*).

Somerset Durlough Reservoir, 11th-14th July (S. Rogers *et al.*).

Warwickshire Brandon Marsh, 8th July (M. Taylor *et al.*).

1990 Highland Bunkargaig, Loch Lochy, 31st May to 1st June, photographed (A. Mee, D. M. Pullan *et al.*) (plate 139). Loch Droma, 3rd June (J. McGhie, D. Willis *et al.*), not same as Loch Lochy; metal ring, right leg, untraced.

(Almost cosmopolitan; extremely local in Europe) A return to numbers more typical of recent years after the scarcity in 1991. Given the regular, if small, numbers wintering in the Netherlands and Belgium, it seems only a matter of time before one winters somewhere in Britain. The Northumberland individual was photographed but no photographs were submitted to the Committee, nor were details of at least two other reports.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 81, 1)

Avon Bath, 13th June (P. J. Basterfield).

1991 Norfolk Stiffkey, 16th-17th June (S. J. Harrap, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

(Eurasia and Southern Africa; winters Africa) A further addition to the remarkable series of records in 1991 and then a return to the pre-1987 numbers. In a spring with so many eastern vagrants, this perhaps suggests that our ones tend to be southern in origin.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 57, 4)

Cheshire Neumann's and Marston Flashes, 2nd-3rd October (R. B. Dyke, D. M. Walters *et al.*), presumed same as Cumbria.

Cleveland Haverton Hole, 5th May (M. A. Blick, C. Sharp *et al.*).

Cumbria Near Kirkbride, 30th September (R. Bottomley), also in Cheshire.

Kent Stodmarsh area, since 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 513) to 4th April, 1st August to end of year; same, Sheppey, 21st-28th March, 29th April to 31st May, 18th-22nd July (per D. W. Taylor).

Norfolk Cley and Kelling Quag, 6th May (D. A. Bridges, M. N. Sidwell, Miss B. Vevers *et al.*).

Suffolk Carlton Marshes, 6th-8th May (R. C. Smith *et al.*); same, Minsmere, 6th (M. Farrow, G. R. Weleh *et al.*), not same as Norfolk.

1987 Buckinghamshire Willen Lake, 29th May (*Brit. Birds* 81: 544), now considered not acceptable.

1988 Bedfordshire South Mills, 13th May (*Brit. Birds* 82: 560), now considered not acceptable.

(Almost cosmopolitan, but nearest breeders in Camargue wintering in Africa) The unacceptable 1987 and 1988 records, together with one from Cambridgeshire in 1989, are now considered to have been insufficiently well-documented to exclude the possibility of confusion with the Hertfordshire Puna Ibis *Plegadis ridgwayi*, which is known to have absented itself periodically from its usual haunts. An excellent year for new birds, with at least four individuals appearing. This was mirrored in other northern European countries, with records in Belgium, Finland and Sweden.

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* (0, 8, 0)

IRELAND

A returning adult of the North American race *C. c. columbianus* was recorded as follows.

1991-92 Wexford Adult, North Slob, 3rd March and 17th December to 2nd February 1992.
(North America)

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 76, 0)

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) Because of the confusion over origins of the ones seen in Britain, the Committee has opted to provide details of all occurrences in the species comment only. This allows details to be placed on record, but not included in the statistics, which are intended to relate to wild individuals.

The Finnish re-introduction scheme produced the 'neck-ringed' individual at Slimbridge from 1990 onwards; introduced stock in Sweden has already bred with wild individuals and produced young, which have not been ringed. The effect of these schemes is that we can no longer assume that birds displaying 'traditional' features of wild Lesser White-fronted Goose are genuine 'wild' birds. It is important, so that patterns can be assessed and monitored, that all records of this species are submitted, even when they are suspected of being feral.

An adult was at Chew Valley and Blagdon Lakes, Avon, from 18th October 1991 to 15th February 1992. An adult was at Read's Island, Humberside, from 8th May to about 12th October 1992, when it was shot dead. In Kent, two adults and an immature were in the Westbere area from 5th to 19th May 1991 and an adult was in the Sheppey/Elmley/Swale area from 24th February to 16th May 1992. In Lancashire in 1991, single adults were at Rufford on 7th October, Martin Mere from 4th October to 6th November and on 27th November, Little Crosby on 3rd December and Cockerham on 8th December: these could have referred to just two individuals; also, ringed first-winter (captive-reared, released Swedish Lapland) at Aldcliffe Marsh from 22nd November 1991 to at least 22nd April 1992. In Lincolnshire, an adult with an injured leg was at Saltfleetby on 31st October 1992, and other single adults were at Musselburgh, Lothian, on 15th-17th June 1992, at Stanhoe, Norfolk, from 9th to at least 23rd November 1991, and at Blithfield, Staffordshire, on 5th and 13th October 1991. In addition, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust summer survey identified 29 free-flying individuals, including 24 in East Anglia. The principal site was the Otter Trust at Bungay, Suffolk, where a flock of 15 full-winged birds is kept. There were four

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at Lackford Wildfowl Reserve, two on the River Bure broads and singles at three other Norfolk sites. Elsewhere, there were two in Gloucestershire and singles in Kent, Clwyd and Cumbria. We have also heard of a free-flying flock in Dorset, and would welcome further details of this.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (1, 54, 0)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *B. b. uigrcaus* were recorded as follows:

Hampshire See Sussex, West.

Suffolk See 1991 Suffolk below.

Sussex, West Thorney Island and other localities, Chichester Harbour, adult, since 1991 to 15th February, presumed same, 11th October to 1993; also visited Hayling Island, Hampshire; another adult, 30th January possibly to 8th February, presumed same as second 1991 individual (C. B. Collins *et al.*). See 1991 Sussex, West, below.

1990 Hampshire Farlington Marsh, adult, at least 8th January (I. Lakin, R. White *et al.*).

1990 Kent Swalecliffe area, adult, 23rd October to 25th November (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514), observers were J. A. S. Patterson *et al.*

1991 Suffolk Felixstowe, adult, 8th December to 26th May 1992 (M. C. Marsh *et al.*).

1991 Sussex, West Thorney Island and other localities, Chichester Harbour, adult, since 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 459) to 3rd January; presumed same, 25th October intermittently to 1992, accompanied by four juveniles resembling *B. b. bernicla*; adult, 13th-21st January, presumed returning 1989 individual (*Brit. Birds* 83: 448), accompanied on 21st by four juveniles resembling *B. b. nigricaus* (C. B. Collins).

IRELAND

1989 Wicklow Adult, Kilcoole, 18th April.

1991-92 Down Adult, Newcastle and Minervastown, 24th February to 4th March 1991 and presumably the same individual at Newcastle from 30th December to at least 2nd April 1992. It was also seen at Killough from 11th to 19th April 1992.

1991 Dublin Adult, Bull Island, 16th to 22nd April. Adult, Rogerstown, 29th December.

1991 Londonderry Adult, Faughanvale, Lough Foyle, 25th October. Considered to be the same individual as seen in previous years.

1992 Dublin Adult, Rogerstown, 28th November. Adult, Corballis, 22nd November.

1992 Londonderry Adult, Faughanvale, Lough Foyle, 7th to 28th October. The same individual as in previous years.

Most, if not all, of these records very probably refer to returning individuals.

(Arctic North America and East Siberia; winters USA and East Asia) There was an adult at Havre des Pas, Jersey, on 28th October 1991 to 6th February 1992, presumed to be returning individual last recorded 4th-12th December 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 543). As mentioned last year and demonstrated in the 1991 entry for Sussex, there now appear to be 'hybrid' juveniles visiting Britain and, consequently, descriptions must now eliminate these and show all the characters of this race. 'Hybrid' young have also been reported in Zuidholland and Zeeland, Netherlands (*Dutch Birding* 15: 61-63).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 25, 0)

Cumbria Rockliffe Marsh, first-winter, 22nd March to 19th April (A. Baldwin, D. Bailey, C. Wilson *et al.*), presumed same as Dumfries & Galloway.

Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock since 1991, then Mershead to 7th March, also in Cumbria; presumed same, Caerlaverock, as adult, 5th October to 7th November, near Dumfries, 10th November to 10th January 1993 (P. N. Collin *et al.*).

1991 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, first-winter, 2nd October to 1992 (P. N. Collin *et al.*).

(West Siberia; winters Southeast Europe) A welcome return for this lovely goose, not recorded in Britain since 1988, but, in typical fashion, returning in

successive years. Let us hope that this presages a run of records similar to that in the mid 1980s.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 227, 10)

Dorset Littlesea, The Fleet, ♂, 31st October; same, Lodmoor, 15th to at least 22nd November (D. J. Chown, I. Prophet, J. Williamson *et al.*).

Fife Burntisland, ♂, 10th October to 1993, presumed returning individual last recorded Lochore Meadows, 8th December 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514); first-winter ♂, 30th October to 3rd November; ♀, 30th October to 1993, presumed returning individual last recorded Stenhouse Reservoir, 13th January 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514) (D. E. Dickson, J. S. Nadin *et al.*). Stenhouse Reservoir, ♂, 28th November, same as Burntisland (J. S. Nadin).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, first-winter ♂, 15th September (D. B. Paynter *et al.*).

Grampian Loch of Strathbeg, ♂, 6th-8th June (P. D. Bloor, Dr I. M. Phillips *et al.*).

Highland Loch Ussie, ♂, since 1991 to 18th January (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514).

Lancashire Martin Mere, ♂, 17th-20th October (P. Massey *et al.*).

Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, ♀, 26th March to 7th April, age/sex uncertain, 4th-22nd October (A. H. J. Harrop, T. Mitcham, J. Wright *et al.*).

Shetland Sac Water, Voe, ♂, 9th-12th June (K. A. Mason *et al.*).

Strathclyde An Phaophail, Tiree, ♂, 21st May (I. D. Bullock, A. Knight).

1991 Cumbria Leven Estuary, ♂, 26th February (D. Jewell), presumed returning individual last recorded 13th-25th February 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 459).

1991 Fife Lochore Meadows, ♂, 15th October to at least 8th December (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514), also at Burntisland (B. H. Little *et al.*).

1991 Hampshire Lower Test Marshes, ♂, 9th February to 15th April (M. L. Edgeller, M. Ratier, D. J. Unsworth *et al.*).

1991 Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, ♂, to 27th January (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514), to 22nd February; presumed same, Rosebery Reservoir, 3rd February (R. W. J. Smith, L. L. J. Vick).

1991 Northumberland Cresswell Pond, ♂, 22nd-29th December, photographed (J. Brooke, I. Fisher, S. Sexton *et al.*).

IRELAND

1991 Cork Adult male, Rosscarbery, 1st November.

1991-92 Fermanagh Male and female, Castle Caldwell, Lower Lough Erne, 16th January to 26th March 1991. The same individuals were again present from 8th October 1991 to 3rd April 1992.

1992 Clare Adult male, Lough O'Grady, 22nd May to 1st June. Probably the same individual as recorded in 1991.

1992 Kerry Adult male, Ballydavid, 21st to 22nd June.

(North America; winters USA and Central America) The trio in Fife prompt the suspicion that breeding may have taken place somewhere other than on the west side of the Atlantic and this could, in turn, suggest that they are not of genuinely wild origin. Even so, could the Grampian male have been that on Shetland making a refuelling stop en route to Iceland? Further records from Grampian remain under consideration. A 1991 record from Pett Level, East Sussex, on 1st June was considered to relate to two probable escapes.

At the BBRC identification meeting, evidence was presented showing that some of the supposedly diagnostic features separating this species from Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope* are unreliable. This will be published in 'From the Rarities Committee's files' in the near future.

Common Teal *Anas crecca* (13, 323, —)

Drakes showing the characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis* were recorded as follows:

1989 Sussex, West Arundel, 21st April to 1st May (*Brit. Birds* 83: 450), 2nd (A. S. Cook).



142 & 143. Male Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris*: above, Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, May 1991 (Martin S. Garner); below, Kendal, Cumbria, December 1992 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



1990 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, 2nd-10th July (C. Featherstone, A. Grieve *et al.*).

1990 Norfolk Cley, 21st March to 25th April (M. A. Golley, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1990 Sussex, West Arundel, 10th-24th March (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515), presumed returning 1989 individual above.

1990 Yorkshire, North/West Fairburn Ings, 30th March to 8th May (R. Horner, J. Lunn *et al.*).

(North America) A batch of records from past years; this race is no longer considered by the Rarities Committee.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 156, 6)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, ♀, 29th July to 13th August (K. L. Fox, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Cheshire Inner Marsh Farm, ♂, 27th-28th May (G. Hogan, G. H. Rhodes, M. G. & Dr J. E. Turner *et al.*).

Cornwall Upper Tamar Reservoir, ♂, first-winter ♂ and ♀, 11th January (S. M. Christophers, E. J. Cook).

Lancashire Martin Mere, ♂, 3rd-6th September (D. J. Rigby, C. G. Tomlinson *et al.*).

1988 Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, ♀, 20th August to 8th October (*Brit. Birds* 84: 461), aged as first-summer, reared three, probably four, hybrid young, probably present since June.

1988 Yorkshire, North Bolton-on-Swale, ♀ or immature, 29th September to 9th October (D. Beaumont *et al.*).

1991 Dorset Abbotsbury, first-winter, 30th October to 2nd November (M. A. Hallett *et al.*).

(North America; winters south to Brazil) A male at Arundel Wildfowl Reserve, West Sussex, from 2nd to at least 27th November 1991 was considered likely to have been of captive origin; it had some white primaries. Partial albinism occurs much more commonly among captive-bred birds than in the wild. The presence of presumed hybrid offspring in Cambridgeshire in 1988 is another compounding problem.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 313, 8)

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, ♂, since 1991 (see 1991 below), intermittently to 4th March, 14th October to 1993, presumed same, Marazion, at least 14th February, Loe Pool, intermittently, 19th April to 22nd November, Sithians Reservoir, 19th-29th September, 2nd October, Bussow Reservoir, 13th October (J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

Cumbria River Kent, Kendal, ♂, 25th November to 1993, photographed (J. Lishman *et al.*) (plate 143), presumed same as Wayoh Reservoir, Lancashire, last recorded 22nd December 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515).

Devon Topsham, ♂, 27th May (D. Wood).

Grampian Loch of Strathbeg, ♂, at least 10th-14th May (J. D. Poyner *et al.*).

Greater London Lonsdale Road Reservoir, ♂, 20th April (B. P. Aris, M. J. & Mrs A. P. Earp *et al.*).

Hampshire Timsbury Gravel-pit, ♂, since 1991 (see 1991 below), to 5th April, 14th October to 1993 (per J. M. Clark).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 3rd May (P. G. Akers *et al.*).

Norfolk Acle, Ranworth and Wroxham Broads, ♂, 17th December 1991 to 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515), 5th January (C. & J. R. Appleton, M. Fiszler *et al.*), to 9th April (per G. E. Dunmore), presumed same, Ranworth Broad, 31st December to 1993 (B. W. Jarvis *et al.*).

Warwickshire Lea Marston, ♂, 17th-19th April (P. Clarke, D. A. Jennings *et al.*).

Western Isles Loch Siapavat, Lewis, ♂, 17th March (P. Cunningham, R. D. Wemyss *et al.*).

1989 Yorkshire, West Pugney's Gravel-pit, Wakefield, ♂, at least 24th April (*Brit. Birds* 83: 452), presumed same, Swillington Ings, 27th May to 19th June (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*), subsequently recorded 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 462; 85: 516), 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 516 and below).

1990 Devon Roadford Reservoir, ♂, January to at least 11th March (Mrs J. P. Smalley, T. H. Smith *et al.*).

1990 Hampshire Timsbury Gravel-pit, ♂, returning 1989 individual (*Brit. Birds* 83: 452), to at least 28th January, 22nd December to 1991, also Alresford Pond, 27th January (per J. M. Clark).

1991 Buckinghamshire Willen Lake, ♂, 12th May (A. V. Harding, E. J. Reed, A. Webb *et al.*) (plate 142).

1991 Cornwall Argal and College Reservoirs, ♀, 9th-28th February (B. Cave *et al.*). Drift Reservoir and Marazion, two ♂♂ since 1990 to 6th March, one to 22nd (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515), one to 30th, other to 17th April, both, Loe Pool, 1st, 20th April, one, 10th, one or other, 10th August to 30th November, presumed one of same, Drift Reservoir, 14th December to 1992 (per S. M. Christophers, J. F. Ryan).

1991 Dyfed Milford Haven, ♂, 23rd to at least 25th April (J. W. Donovan, P. Kerrison *et al.*), possibly same as Cornwall.

1991 Hampshire Allington (Lane) Gravel-pit, ♂, 9th-28th March (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515), same, Timsbury Gravel-pit, 1st January to 8th March, returned, Linbrook Lake, Blashford, 16th-27th November, Timsbury Gravel-pit, 28th to 1992 (per J. M. Clark).

1991 Norfolk Acle, Ranworth and Wroxham Broads, ♂, 10th-25th February (*Brit. Birds* 85: 515), Belaugh Broad, 26th (per P. R. Allard).

1991 Northumberland Cresswell Pond, ♂, 21st September (P. W. Davidson, R. Fairhurst per B. N. Rossiter), same, Druridge Pools, 22nd-26th (per B. N. Rossiter), same as Tyne & Wear (*Brit. Birds* 85: 516).

1991 Strathclyde Martnaham Loch, ♀, 6th-16th April (W. A. Davidson, R. H. Hogg *et al.*). Bogton Loch and Waterside, River Doon, ♂, 19th January to 20th April (P. McEwan, G. Mitchell, A. Stevenson *et al.*), returned, Bogton Loch, 16th October to 6th November (J. Hazlett *et al.*), previously recorded, Bogton Loch, 9th-10th October 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 462).

1991 Yorkshire, South Worsborough Reservoir, ♂, 4th October (G. Jackson, G. Lee, K. D. Robertson *et al.*), same, Thrybergh Reservoir, 7th-24th, photographed (K. J. Hayhow, R. J. Scott), same as West Yorkshire.

1991 Yorkshire, West Parker's Pond, Ledston, ♂, 24th March (*Brit. Birds* 85: 516), 1st April (J. Martin).

IRELAND

1991 Armagh Male, Oxford Island, 23rd April, and presumably the same individual at Ellis's Gut from 5th to 6th May (both Lough Neagh).

1991 Londonderry Female or first-winter male, Ballyronan, Lough Neagh, 24th October.

1992 Cork Male, Gearagh, 31st October.

1992 Kerry Male, Killarney, 17th April.

(North America; winters to Central America) An interesting source for speculation is the annual frequency of widely dispersed and brief spring records of what must be passage migrants, but whence, and whither and in what direction might they be travelling? None but the Milford Haven, Dyfed, record in 1991 seems even possibly related to those elsewhere; might that one have called in at Inch Lake, Co. Donegal, on 5th May (*Brit. Birds* 85: 516)? It is also of interest to note the high proportion of spring records elsewhere in Europe (*Brit. Birds* 86: 38), and might the Iceland bird on 10th-11th May 1990 have been en route from British waters?

This species ceases to be considered by the Rarities Committee for any record on or after 1st January 1994.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 4, 1)

Dorset Hatch Pond, Poole Harbour, first-winter ♂, 28th November, 4th-5th December, photographed (M. Constantine, I. M. Lewis, S. Robson, S. F. Smith *et al.*), same, Littlesea, 6th, 10th-11th December (S. J. Morrison).

IRELAND

1991-92-93 Down The male of previous years visited several Co. Down sites up to 23rd February 1991. It returned on 17th November and remained to 17th March 1992. It returned again on 15th November and remained into 1993. This individual first appeared in this area from February to April 1988 and has returned every winter since then.

(Western North America; winters south and east to Colombia) The price of a captive-bred Lesser Scaup has decreased considerably over the past few years, which must indicate that more are being bred. There seems no reason,

however, to doubt the credentials of the one in Northern Ireland. As mentioned in the 1990 report (*Brit. Birds* 84: 463), identification of this duck, particularly in non-adult-male plumage, is difficult, and the observers of the Dorset bird should be congratulated.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 165, 4)

Borders St Abb's Head, second-year ♂, 22nd April to 18th May (R. G. Young *et al.*), probably returning 1991 first-year ♂ (*Brit. Birds* 85: 519), presumed also in Grampian, Northumberland.

Fife Tayport, ♂, 19th January to at least 8th March (D. E. Dickson, M. Ramage *et al.*), presumed returning 1991 individual (*Brit. Birds* 85: 519) and one or other of Ythan Estuary, Grampian, individuals.

Grampian Annachie, ♂, 23rd March (T. W. Marshall). Ythan Estuary, ♂, 24th March to end of May (T. W. Marshall, S. A. Regneussan *et al.*), same as Annachie; another ♂, 3rd to end of May (Dr I. M. Phillips, K. D. Shaw *et al.*), one or other also in Fife. Girdleness, second-year ♂, 11th-12th January (Dr I. M. Phillips, S. A. Reeves, K. D. Shaw *et al.*), presumed same, Sandend, 31st May to 8th June (D. Barr, M. J. H. Cook, P. T. Hirst), probably same as Borders, Northumberland; ♂, 21st-23rd September (Dr I. M. Phillips, G. Ruthven). Lossiemouth, ♂, 27th September to 3rd October (R. Proctor, I. Sutton *et al.*) (fig. 1), probably same as Embo, Highland.

Highland Brora area, ♂, since 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 519), to 1st March, 24th December to 1993 (per A. Vittery); same, Embo, 5th-11th October (R. J. Evans per A. Vittery), also Lossiemouth. Grampian. Sinclair's Bay, first-winter ♂, 12th May (J. Smith), presumed same, Wick, 25th August (A. Banwell, L. G. R. Evans, P. J. Heath *et al.*).

Northumberland Cheswick Rocks, ♂, probably second-year, 27th-28th June, photographed (A. Janes, M. J. Sharp *et al.*), presumed same as Borders, Grampian.

Shetland Uyeasound, Unst, ♂, 12th January (M. Heubeck, M. Mellor, R. J. Tulloch), presumed same, Skuda Sound, 8th March (M. G. Pennington), Whalefirth, on at least 28th April (S. Smith per D. Suddaby), Cullivoe, 1st June to 4th July (J. N. Dymond *et al.*), Muckle Flugga, 27th August (H. R. Harrop, R. J. Tulloch *et al.*), off Gutcher, 10th-28th November (per D. Suddaby), returning to Uyeasound area 28th December to 1993 (H. R. Harrop, M. Heubeck, R. J. Tulloch). Sulom Voe, ♂, 21st-23rd August (H. R. Harrop, R. J. Tulloch *et al.*). Trestra area, ♂, 9th January to 31st May, 26th November to 1993 (per D. Suddaby), same, Trondra, 26th August to 3rd September (H. R. Harrop, M. Heubeck, J. Swale *et al.*), presumed same as 1990-91 below.

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, ♂, 12th-15th June (J. Vaughan *et al.*).

1990 Shetland Trestra Voe, Radayre and Raewick, ♂, since 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454), to 3rd July, 21st November to 1991 (per D. Suddaby).

1991 Grampian Ythan Estuary, ♂, 14th December (T. W. Marshall), presumed one or other last recorded July (*Brit. Birds* 85: 519).

1991 Highland Wick Bay area, ♂, 19th-20th May, photographed (E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*), possibly same as Brora (*Brit. Birds* 85: 519).

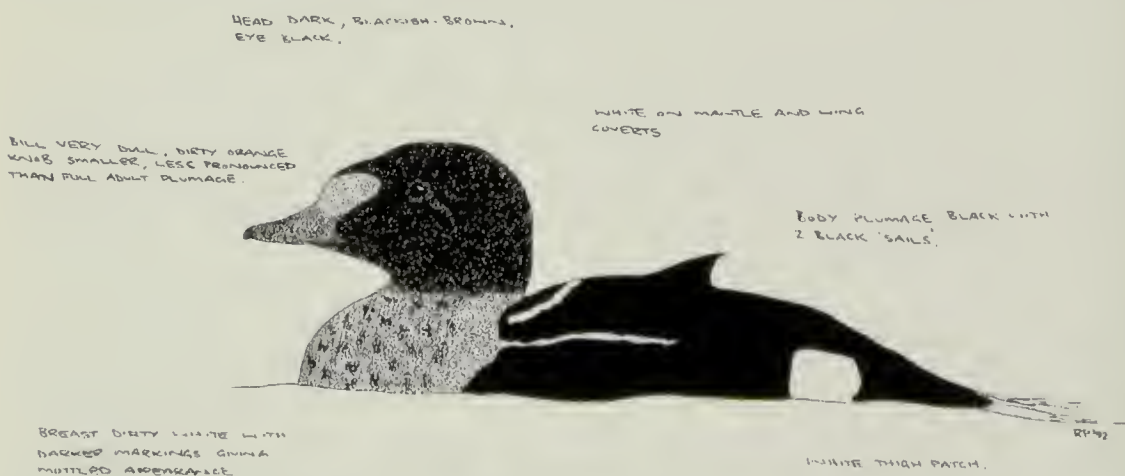


Fig. 1. Male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* in eclipse, Lossiemouth, Grampian, 3rd October 1992 (R. Proctor)

(Circumpolar Arctic) Most of those recorded this year relate to known individuals. The St Kilda bird, at least, however, seems to be new, while one of the Scottish birds crossed the border into Northumberland. The statistics are being rationalised and a paper on King Eider occurrences will be published in *British Birds* shortly.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, 290, -)

1982 Norfolk Cley, 18th September (*Brit. Birds* 77: 517), now considered inadequately documented.

1990 Humberside Reighton Sands, near Specton, ♂, 11th November (T. Isherwood).

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1990 Down Male, Dundrum Bay, 5th January.

(North America) This species left the Committee's list in 1990.

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus* (5, 0, 0)

1983 Buckinghamshire Willen Lake, ♀, 28th-29th December (*Brit. Birds* 81: 550), now regarded as probable escape.

(North America) An almost inevitable decision after events of the past two to three years. In the Netherlands, there are records of this species in most years which are regarded as referring to escapes.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 158, 12)

Dorset Portland, 15th May (D., G. & Mrs S. Walbridge). East Knighton, 16th May (C. Auld, R. Price, N. Symes *et al.*). Near Creech Heath, 6th June, photographed (R. J. Arnfield, A. E. Blake) (plate 144), presumed same, Durlston, 5th-6th (per M. Cade) (plate 145).



144 & 145. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, June 1992: above, near Creech Heath, Dorset (A. E. Blake); below, Durlston, Dorset (Gavin Maclean)



Essex Stow Marsh, 17th May (A. W. Shearring). East Tilbury, 24th May (F. Frampton, G. Glombeck, P. Warner *et al.*). Shoeburyness, 2nd June (A. R. Perkins). Great Wakering, 21st August (A. R. & Miss J. Perkins).

Humberside Tophill Low, 11th April (R. Lyon, F. X. Mollat).

Kent Stodmarsh area, 24th May (Mrs S. B. Carter, T. Hatton, R. S. Kelly *et al.*).

Lancashire Pendle, 23rd May (P. Massey).

Norfolk Stiffkey, 24th August (S. M. Starling).

Wight, Isle of Godshill, 19th May (Mrs M. Beisley, D. B. Wooldridge).

1988 Cleveland South Gare, 16th April (M. A. Blick, D. Page, N. A. Preston).

1989 Kent Sandwich Bay, 29th May (P. W. J. Findley, W. E. Fletcher *et al.*).

1989 Lincolnshire Frampton and Holbeach Marshes, 9th June (C. R. & Mrs K. R. Casey, M. H. Champion *et al.*).

1989 Yorkshire, West Swillington, 2nd May (A. J. & I. A. Ross).

1990 Hampshire Hawkhill Inclosure, New Forest, 9th May (D. J. Burges).

1990 Scilly Bryher and Tresco, 13th May (J. W. Hale, D. H. Payne *et al.*).

1991 Cornwall Hayle, 16th April (A. R. Birch, L. P. Williams).

1991 Kent Broadstairs, 4th August (B. Short *et al.*).

1991 Yorkshire, North Near Hillen, 7th May (G. J. Todd).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia; winters Africa and southern Asia)
The distinctive jizz of Black Kite is difficult to convey on paper, and records can be equally difficult to judge: there are several still awaiting a final decision from the Committee. Despite this, there were more in 1992 than in 1991, mostly spring overshoots.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 21, 0)

1989 Humberside Humberstone, 26th April (J. B. Baranowski, C. Gorman *et al.*). Spurn, 8th May (I. Crowther, C. P. Musgrave *et al.*). Messingham, Scawby and Brigg area, 21st-22nd May (W. Gillatt, J. Petyt *et al.*). All presumed same as 1989 Humberside and Lincolnshire individual already published (*Brit. Birds* 83: 157).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) No acceptable records of wild individuals once again.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 386, 107)

Avon Stanton Wick, first-summer ♂, 30th May to 3rd June (A. H. Davis *et al.*).

Berkshire Dinton Pastures Country-park, Hurst, first-summer ♂, 3rd June (N. Edwards, D. E. Horton *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, ♂, first-summer ♂, 16th May (O. & M. Marks, B. S. & G. Martin, P. Mason); ♀, 16th (O. & M. Marks, B. S. & G. Martin). Fen Drayton, first-summer ♀, 28th May to 1st June (B. S. Martin, J. L. F. Parslow, R. M. Patient); first-summer ♀, 8th-13th June (D. Bilecock, J. L. F. Parslow, R. M. Patient).

Cleveland Haverton Hole, ♂, 12th June (C. Dodsworth, S. J. Hinley).

Cornwall Porthgwarra, ♂, 21st May (J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Kynance Cove, ♀, probably first-summer, 13th June (J. Bannerjee, J. A. Rowlands). Crows-an-Wra, first-summer ♂, 20th-28th June (D. S. Flumm, G. B. Hocking, S. P. Jones *et al.*).

Cumbria Nenthead, near Alston, first-summer ♂, 8th June (R. Bottomley), seen to fly into Co. Durham.

Devon Lundy, ♀, 19th-24th May (A. M. Jewels, I. Kendall, P. Mayer *et al.*). Lee Bay, first-summer ♂, 22nd-23rd May, photographed (J. Nobbs, A. Perry). Brauntton Burrows, ♂, 31st May to 2nd June (M. & Mrs B. Blackmore, J. M. Breeds).

Dorset Hengistbury Head, first-summer ♂, 3rd-4th June (A. Hayden *et al.*) (plates 146 & 147).

Durham See Cumbria.

Dyfed Rhandirmwyn, ♀, 29th May (A. R. Pickup *et al.*). Bosherton Lake, ♀, 2nd June (R. J. Ellis, R. J. Haycock).

Essex Abberton Reservoir, first-summer ♂, 21st-24th May (R. Allen, M. Cock, J. Frank *et al.*), probably same, Fingringhoe, 23rd (R. P. Hull). Latchington, first-summer ♂, 23rd-29th August (C. J. & Mrs M. J. Mackenzie-Grieve *et al.*).

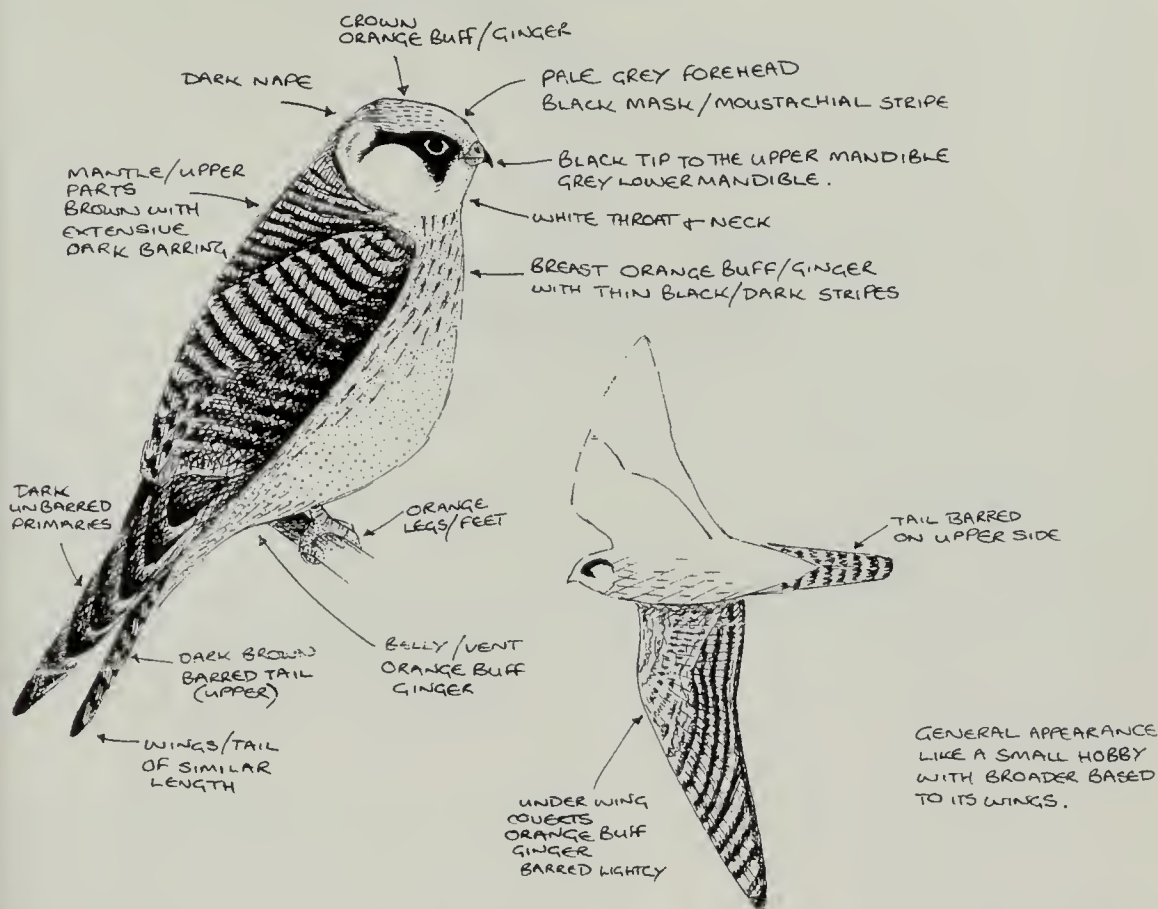
RED-FOOTED FALCON (1ST SUMMER ♀)

Fig. 2. First-summer female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, May-June 1992 (R. G. Baatsen)

Gloucestershire Cotswold Water Park, two first-summer ♀♀, 29th May to 2nd June, photographed (R. G. Baatsen, P. Chaney *et al.*) (fig. 2), also in Wiltshire.

Grampian Kirkton, first-summer ♀, 31st May to 13th June, taken into care injured, photographed (A. G. Clarke, I. Gordon *et al.*) (plate 153).

Greater London Walthamstow, ♀, 2nd June (S. Fenwick).

Hampshire Bishop's Dyke, ♂, 17th May (K. A. Arber, P. Gammidge, Dr P. Whitfield), presumed same, Ashley Walk, 25th-26th (M. C. & P. Combridge, Dr A. M. Hanby, G. C. Stephenson *et al.*). Near Burley, first-summer ♀, 10th-15th June (N. W. Orr), presumed same, Picket Post, 21st (M. C. & P. Combridge), presumed same, Fritham Plain, 27th (T. M. J. Doran). Houghton, ♂, first-summer ♂, 24th May, ♂ to 25th (Dr A. M. Hanby, G. C. Stephenson *et al.*). Southampton, first-summer ♂, 19th May (D. A. Christie).

Highland Duthil, near Carrbridge, ♂, 29th May (D. E. & J. Horrabin).

Humberside Spurn, ♀, 15th May (D. P. Boyle *et al.*); first-summer ♂, 29th May (J. S. Barclay, A. M. Pratt *et al.*). Tophill Low, ♂, 28th May (W. H. Icalman, G. Norris). Flamborough Head, first-summer ♂, 30th May (J. McLoughlin).

Kent Rushenden, first-summer ♂, 14th May (J. A. Rowlands). Stodmarsh, at least seven: ♀, 20th May (C. D. Abrams, D. B. Rosair); at least two ♀♀, 22nd May (C. D. Abrams, J. K. Archer, J. M. Warne); three first-summer ♂♂, three ♀♀, 23rd-25th (C. D. Abrams, J. Cantelo, R. J. Fairbank *et al.*), ♂, age uncertain, 27th, presumed one of same (M. J. Baldock); ♂, age uncertain, 10th June, presumed additional (C. H. Hindle, D. W. Silliphant, D. Tutt *et al.*). Sandwich Bay, ♀, 3rd June (P. A. Brown); ♂, 10th (I. Hunter, S. D. Stansfield); ♀, age uncertain, 15th (S. D. Stansfield); ♂, age uncertain, 25th (P. W. J. Findley *et al.*). Northbourne, first-summer ♂, 23rd May (D. Anning). St Margaret's Bay, ♀, 15th June (C. S. Johnson).

Lancashire Blackpool, first-summer ♀, 29th May to 3rd June (M. Jones, K. McEllan, D. Pitman *et al.*) (plates 148 & 149).

Leicestershire Rutland Water, ♂, 7th-13th June (J. A. Sharpe, C. J. Watts *et al.*).



146 & 147. First-summer male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Hengistbury Head, Dorset, June 1992
(P. R. Boardman)



Merseyside Marshside Marsh, first-summer ♀, 25th May (Dr B. McCarthy).

Norfolk Winterton, ♀, 26th April to 3rd May (J. Maslin, I. N. Smith *et al.*); ♀, 28th May (I. N. Smith), presumed same, Horsey, 29th (J. R. Whitelegg, P. G. H. Wolstenholme). Horsey, ♀, 14th May (C. Pitt, F. E. Pitts), presumed same, Gorleston, 14th (B. W. Jones); probably same, Bradwell, 15th (P. R. Allard). Happisburgh, ♀, 14th May (T. R. Barker, M. Fiszer, P. J. Heath). Blakeney Point, first-summer ♂, 14th May (M. S. Cavanagh, A. M. Stoddart); ♀, 14th May (M. S. Cavanagh, A. M. Stoddart), presumed same, Cley, 14th (A. P. Benson, D. A. Bridges). Titchwell, first-summer ♂, 14th May (C. Ward), probably same, Holme, 14th (G. F. Hibberd). Welney, ♂, 26th-31st May (J. Arbon, J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Holme, ♂, 28th-29th May (W. Boyd, G. F. Hibberd, N. Lawton *et al.*); ♀, 28th May (G. F. Hibberd), presumed same, Brancaster, 29th (R. Q. Skeen *et al.*). Blakeney Point, ♀, 29th May (M. J. & R. Hills). Holkham Meads, ♀, 29th May (V. Eve). How Hill and Reedham Water, first-summer ♂, 15th-20th June (M. Dane, P. J. Heath *et al.*). Hickling, two ♂♂, 28th June (J. S. Hampshire, B. W. Jarvis *et al.*).

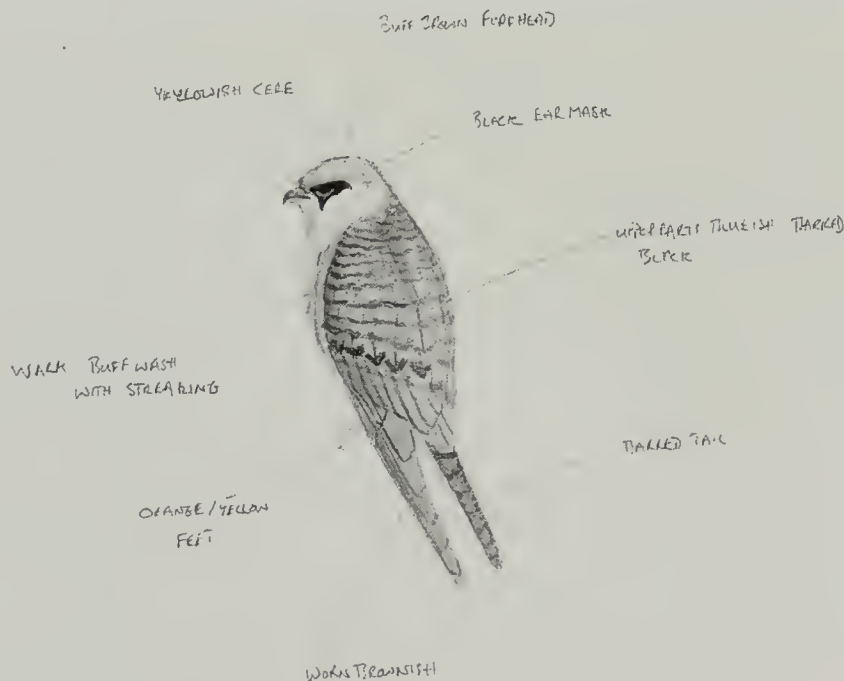
Northamptonshire Thrapston, first-summer ♂, 23rd May to 4th June, photographed (Dr R. J. Chandler *et al.*).

Orkney Rendall, ♀, 1st June (M. Grant, J. B. Ribbands). North Ronaldsay, first-summer ♂♂, 28th May to 10th June, two, 28th, photographed (D. Patterson, K. A. Wilson *et al.*); first-summer ♀, 2nd June (P. J. Donnelly, K. A. Wilson *et al.*) (fig. 3).

Scilly St Martin's, first-summer ♀, 19th, 23rd May; same, St Mary's, 20th-21st (Miss C. E. Lankester, K. Pellow *et al.*).

Shetland At least seven: Burravoe, Yell, ♂, 29th May (M. Heubeck, D. Suddaby *et al.*), probably same, Voe, 3rd-14th June (A. Hawick, K. Osborn *et al.*). Vesta Virdin, Sullom, first-summer ♂, 29th May (J. & T. P. Drew), presumed same, Channerwick, 30th (M. Mellor *et al.*); presumed same, Sandwick, 31st (L. Dalziel *et al.* per D. Suddaby). Roc Brecks, Sullom, ♀, 1st-3rd June (J. & T. P. Drew *et al.*), probably also at Bixter. Tingwall, ♀, 5th June (M. Heubeck), probably also at Bixter. Bixter, ♀, 10th-11th June (N. E. & Mrs B. Wall *et al.*) (plates 150 & 151); another ♀, 10th-11th (H. R. Harrop, K. Osborn, A. Williams *et al.*), one or other, 12th (per D. Suddaby). Fair Isle, first-summer ♂, 26th-27th May (K. Bowey, P. S. Castle, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); first-summer ♂, 29th-30th (Dr R. Riddington, S. C. Vouier *et al.*); ♀, 29th May to 2nd June (Dr R. Riddington, T. Sweetland *et al.*).

Somerset At least seven: Dunball, first-summer ♂, 19th, 21st May (B. J. Hill). Westhay Moor, second-summer ♂, 18th-22nd May, presumed same, 20th-23rd June; ♂, 20th May (B. J. Hill,



By P. J. DONNELLY

Fig. 3. First-summer female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 2nd June 1992 (P. J. Donnelly)



148-152. Red-footed Falcons *Falco tinnunculus*: above and below, first-summer female, Blackpool, Lancashire, June 1992 (Steve Young/Birdwatch); facing page top and centre, female, Bixter, Shetland, June 1992 (top, N. E. Wall; centre, Dennis Coult); facing page bottom, female, Filey, North Yorkshire, May 1992 (Ian Robinson)







Fig. 4. First-summer male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Landguard, Suffolk, 30th May 1992 (B. J. Small)

B. Rabbits, A. M. & B. R. Slade). Shapwick Heath, ♀, 27th May (D. J. Davies). Westhay Heath, two first-summer ♂♂, 26th May to 22nd June (T. A. Box, B. R. Ellis, B. D. Gibbs *et al.*), presumed one or other, Chilton Moor, 12th June (D. Smallshire); ♀, 14th June (T. A. Box per B. Rabbits), presumed same, Chilton Moor, 8th (Miss M. Bolas); presumed same, Westhay Moor, 14th (J. J. Packer, A. M. Slade per B. Rabbits).



153. First-summer female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Kirkton, Grampian, June 1992 (S. M. D. Alexander)

Suffolk Cavenham Heath, ♂, 21st-22nd April (M. J. Austin, P. V. Hayman *et al.*). Falkenham, ♀, 14th May (P. Harvey). Orfordness, ♀, 24th-25th May (M. D. Crewe *et al.*). North Warren, first-summer ♀, 25th-29th May (W. J. Brame, J. M. Cawston, R. Macklin *et al.*). Landguard, first-summer ♂, 30th May (N. Odin, B. J. Small *et al.*) (fig. 4). Hengrave area, first-summer ♀, 7th to at least 9th June (A. Howe *et al.*). Capel St Andrew, first-summer ♂, 9th June (R. F. Tomlinson). Brandon, ♀, 9th June (A. M. Stevenson, J. L. Thomas). Trimley Marshes, ♀, 15th June (R. Beecroft).

Sussex, East Pett Level, ♀, 5th June (C. H. Dean). Powdermill Reservoir, Scddlescombe, two first-summer ♂♂, ♀, age uncertain, 9th June (J. D. & R. J. Prytherch).

Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, first-summer ♂, 16th-21st May (P. E. Castle *et al.*); two first-summer ♀♀, 31st May to 2nd June (P. E. Castle *et al.*), same as Gloucestershire (fig. 2). Haxton Down, first-summer ♂, 2nd June (B. Maxfield).

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-summer ♀, 26th-30th May, photographed (P. J. Dunn *et al.*); ♀, 30th-31st May (J. Harwood, J. A. Pollintine, A. Stonier *et al.*) (plate 152). Between Muston and Filey, first-summer ♀, 30th to at least 31st May (P. Jones, A. Shirlock, J. Wood), probably same as Filey. Scargill Reservoir, ♂, 26th to at least 31st May (J. E. Atkinson, R. Evison, J. McLoughlin *et al.*). York, ♀, age uncertain, 25th June (D. Denson, V. Green, R. Hilton *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Pugney's Country-park, Wakefield, first-summer ♂, 11th June (S. Daniels, J. M. Turton *et al.*), presumed same, 19th-25th (G. Carr, J. Laws *et al.*).

1987 Suffolk Cavenham Heath, immature ♂, 2nd October (M. Wright).

1988 Cumbria Longtown, ♀, 8th September (D. Johnston).

1988 Kent Sandwich Bay, ♀, 20th June (C. N. Davison, W. E. Fletcher, M. J. Pollard).

1990 Essex Barling, first-summer ♂, 5th May, photographed (A. R. Perkins).

1990 Hampshire Beaulieu Road, first-summer ♂, 28th May (M. A. Hardwick *et al.*), presumed same as 30th (*Brit. Birds* 84: 467).

1991 Cambridgeshire Chesterton, ♀, 23rd May (R. Thewlis).

1991 Norfolk Sandringham Warren, ♀, 26th May (*Brit. Birds* 85: 520), observers included M. Harris.

1991 Somerset Somerton, ♀, 13th September (R. W. Surmon).

IRELAND

1992 Galway Five, Ballyconnelly, 28th April.

(East Europe to Central Siberia; winters in Africa) Unprecedented numbers arrived in two major waves, during 14th-17th May and 28th-30th May. The majority of records were in the Southeast and East Anglia, and comparatively few north of a line from Filby to Morecambe Bay, with the exception of the Northern Isles.

The Committee was disappointed by the low standard of too many of the descriptions, which occasionally were of the 'There were a lot about and this was one' school. In contrast, one of the best descriptions was from a group of golfers who described themselves as 'not really birdwatchers'. If all descriptions had been as comprehensive as that one, there would have been more accepted records this year.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 101, 5)

Durham See 1991 Durham below.

Grampian Bennachie Hills, white-phase, 28th November (D. J. Gill).

Orkney St Ola, Mainland, white-phase, 25th January (S. J. Williams), presumed same, 11th-12th, 20th-24th April (D. Suddaby *et al.*), same, Widewall, South Ronaldsay, 31st (H. Mackenzie).

Shetland Fetlar, white-phase, 22nd February (F. Coutts, B. Thomason, A. Wilson), presumed same, 11th-12th, 20th-24th April (D. Suddaby *et al.*), same, Burravoe, Yell, 14th April (S. Smith).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, first-year white-phase, 26th February to at least 25th March, presumed same, 25th April (T. J. Dix, Miss C. Lee, J. Vaughan *et al.*).

1990 Shetland Trondra and Tingwall, 16th-17th April (*Brit. Birds* 84: 468), was first-winter ♂.

1990 Strathclyde Islay, first-summer ♂ white-phase, 17th April (Dr M. A. Ogilvie, M. A. Peacock).

1991 Durham Eggleston, Teesdale, first-winter white-phase or intermediate, 8th December to 19th January 1992 (D. Raw *et al.*).

1991 Strathclyde Port Charlotte, Islay, juvenile ♀ white-phase, taken into care injured, 3rd November, released, found dead Macarthur's Head, 10th, photographed (E. Wilson *et al.*).

IRELAND

1991 Galway The bird recorded in *Brit. Birds* 85: 521 was present from 31st March to 22nd April.

1991-92 Kerry The bird recorded in *Brit. Birds* 85: 521 was present from 15th November to 13th March 1992.

1992 Londonderry One, Magilligan Point, 18th to 19th April. This bird was, apparently, present in this area of Lough Foyle since early February.

(Circumpolar Arctic) Subsequent events in Kent, yet to be published by us, suggested a degree of prescience in last year's report. The Durham individual was an exciting find, but was on a heavily kept stretch of grouse moor which is an important area for other breeding raptors. The finders realised that, with a large-scale 'twitch', relations between the gamekeepers and bird-watchers would deteriorate to such an extent that important survey work could not continue, so reluctantly had to avoid giving the record publicity.

Baillon's Crane *Porzana pusilla* (many, 8, 1)

Sussex, East Icklesham, ♀, trapped, 11th August (G. Barnes, S. J. R. Rumsey, T. Squire *et al.*).

(Eurasia, Africa and Australasia; European population winters in Africa) With four in the last four years, this species has become unexpectedly more frequent. The latest two are the first in autumn since at least 1957. A recent paper (*Brit. Birds* 86: 303-311) has covered identification at this time of year.



154. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (with Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*), Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, May 1990 (*P. R. Boardman*)



155 & 156. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, August 1992: above, East Tilbury, Essex (*Jack Levene*); below, Cley, Norfolk (*R. C. Wilson*)



Great Bustard *Otis tarda* (many, 20, 0)

1973 Cleveland Goathland Moor, then Yorkshire, 18th August (*Brit. Birds* 68: 334), now considered inadequately documented.

1973 Yorkshire See above.

(Eurasia east from Germany and Iberia to Western China, and North-western Africa)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 175, 7)

Cornwall Marazion, 15th-17th May (R. W. Hirst, M. J. Rogers *et al.*).

Devon Wrafton, juvenile or first-winter, 6th-9th December, second individual, 6th, photographed (L. P. & S. D. Bruce).

Norfolk Hickling, two, 16th May (A. D. Boote, Mr & Mrs M. J. Seago *et al.*). Breydon and Berney Marsh, 20th-23rd May (P. R. Allard, J. Burton *et al.*).

Sussex, East Bewl Water, 19th May (R. Dixon, P. C. Bance *et al.*).

1989 Hampshire Farlington Marsh, 8th November (C. Cockburn).

1990 Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 12th May, photographed (D. A. Custard, I. & P. Rabjohns *et al.*) plate 154, previously published as not accepted (*Brit. Birds* 85: 553).

1990 Western Isles Howmore, South Uist, two, 5th July (M. Wills).

1991 Humberside Southfield Reservoir, 7th May, Flamborough Head, 11th (*Brit. Birds* 85: 522), same, Blacktoft Sands, 7th, 12th (N. Douglas, A. Grieve *et al.*), also in North and South Yorkshire.

1991 Yorkshire, North Filey Dams, 11th May, photographed (D. Bedford, I. Robinson *et al.*), same as Humberside.

1991 Yorkshire, South Wath Ings, 7th May (H. Crooks, J. H. Goddard, J. M. Turton *et al.*), same as Humberside.

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, Australia and the Americas; European population winters Africa) An old Channel Islands occurrence, never officially reported, has, however, been portrayed in *British Birds* (81: plate 202): it was photographed in Guernsey in April 1988.

Another quiet year, after the feasts of 1987 and 1990, was rather surprising when exceptional numbers were in Atlantic France, and a breeding colony was established in the Netherlands. The December record is unusual, with only two previous records in that month.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (30, 48, 1)

Dorset Portland, 31st May (M. Cade, C. Ingham, G. & Mrs S. K. Moyser *et al.*).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) A typical date and short stay. Where are the long-stayers of yesteryear?

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 20, 1)

Cornwall Davidstowe area, first-winter, 2nd-11th October (C. & D. K. Lamsdell, P. J. Okes, J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

(West Asia; winters Africa) An immature that was tentatively reported as Collared Pratincole *G. pratincola* initially before being reidentified as this species.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 39, 0)

1990 Western Isles Eoligarry, Barra, 10th October (A. Stewart).

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1991 Cork Adult, Ballycotton, 7th January to 2nd March.

(North America; winters USA and Central America) None for this year, but late-autumn and winter records are typical.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (0, 10, 1)

Essex East Tilbury, 10th-14th August, photographed (S. Huggins, A. J. Kane, C. Rose *et al.*) (plate 155).

Kent Cliffe, 14th August (T. P. Laws *et al.*), presumed same as Essex.

(Southern Russia east to Mongolia; winters Africa, Southern Asia and Australia) These records are presumably of the same bird as the Cley, Norfolk, individual, which was not officially reported to the Committee in time for this report, despite its having been photographed (plate 156); a report needs to be submitted, with a request for an assessment to be made, before the Committee is entitled to pass judgment on a record.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (3, 157, 6)

Dorset Ferrybridge, first-summer, 20th-22nd May, photographed (M. A. Hallett, G. Walbridge *et al.*). Stanpit Marsh, adult, 22nd-24th May (L. Chappell *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Welford, adult, 15th October (R. D. Gorsage, E. K. & N. McMahon *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, first-summer, 26th to at least 29th May (J. & R. Rettke-Grover, W. E. Oddie *et al.*), same, Green Island, 7th June (W. H. Wagstaff).

Strathclyde Colonsay, adult, 3rd to at least 5th October (J. & P. M. Clarke, D. C. Jardine).

1990 Derbyshire Rother Valley Country-park, juvenile, 12th-15th October (M. N. Reeder *et al.*).

1991 Bedfordshire Cranfield, juvenile, intermittently, 16th to at least 25th November (D. J. Odell, P. Smith *et al.*), also in Buckinghamshire.

1991 Buckinghamshire Broughton, juvenile, intermittently, 12th-25th November, photographed (A. V. Harding, E. J. Reed, C. Ward *et al.*), same as Bedfordshire.

1991 Northamptonshire Pitsford Reservoir, juvenile, 12th-13th October (E. K. & N. McMahon, S. R. Mawby, M. H. Rogers *et al.*).

1991 Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 26th September to 16th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 525, plate 41), same, St Mary's, 22nd-25th September, 14th October (D. J. D. Hickman, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

1991 Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 15th August (P. V. Harvey, N. E. Milius *et al.*).

1991 Warwickshire Grandborough, juvenile, 18th October (T. Marlow, G. M. Pullan *et al.*), same, Draycote Water, 22nd-23rd (T. Marlow, S. Seal, T. W. Willey *et al.*), near Willoughby, 26th (N. F. Osborne).

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1991 Cork Adult, Douglas Estuary, 24th August to 1st September. Juvenile, Clonakilty/Inchydoney, 18th to 27th October.

1991-92 Tyrone Annaghroe, 28th December and 9th February.

1992 Down Strand Lough and Killough Harbour, 2nd to 13th August.

The Irish Rare Birds Committee intends to review all past Irish records of 'Lesser Golden Plovers' *P. dominica*/*P. fulva*.

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia; winters South America)
A reasonable spread of records, with the usual westerly bias.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 17, 4)

Hampshire Needs Oar Point, adult, 27th-28th June, photographed (D. J. Unsworth *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon, adult, 28th May (P. R. Allard).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 1st-3rd August (P. J. Donnelly, D. Jackson, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 2nd-3rd July (N. J. Riddiford, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

1990 Kent Sandwich Bay, adult, 20th-22nd June (K. B. Ellis, J. N. Hollyer *et al.*).

1991 Northumberland Druridge Pools, adult, 22nd-23rd June, photographed (M. G. Anderson, T. I. Mills, J. G. Steele *et al.*) (plate 163).

(North and Northeast Asia, and Alaska; winters southern Asia, Australia and Western North America) Further typical dates, all in summer, when five were seen in Sweden; but, surely, we are overlooking this species in autumn?

American or Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*/*P. fulva* (6, 182, 10)

1989 Clwyd Oakenholt Marsh, adult, 23rd July (C. Bennett, N. J. Holton).

The totals include those specifically identified. The results of the Committee's comprehensive review will be published in *British Birds* next year.

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 31, 0) *

1991 Berkshire Brimpton Gravel-pits, adult, 10th April (D. A. Henshilwood).

(Southeast Russia and West-Central Asia; winters Northeast Africa and Southwest Asia) This individual, at a fairly unlikely locality, must have stunned the observer: what a good find for your local patch.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 62, 3)

Norfolk Hickling, 8th-9th May (J. Hampshire, D. & T. Nicholson).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 15th-18th June, photographed (P. Bush *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 13th-15th May (P. V. Harvey, S. C. Notter *et al.*) (plate 157).

(North America; winters Central and South America) Three more spring records. Could these, plus those in Norfolk and Cleveland in 1989, refer to just one or two individuals?

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (1, 5, 1)

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1992 Wexford Juvenile, North Slob, 3rd to 6th September. This is the first Irish record.

(North America; winters southern USA and Central America) None in Britain, but the juvenile in Co. Wexford was one of the highlights of the year.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (0, 1, 1)

Norfolk Cley, adult, 29th July to 3rd August (S. J. M. Gantlett, M. A. Golley, R. G. Millington, E. T. Myers *et al.*).

(Siberia; winters Southeast Asia and Australia) The second record for Britain and Ireland was this summer-plumaged adult at Cley, Norfolk. The first was on 22nd-29th July 1986 at Blacktoft, Humberside (*Brit. Birds* 81: 557; 82: 391-395). The sixth for Sweden was seen on 24th July 1992; could it have been the Cley bird?

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 318, 3)

1989 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, adult, 9th-14th August (A. Grieve *et al.*).

1991 Dyfed Teifi Estuary, adult, 5th August (J. Green).

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1991 Antrim Duncrue Street Marsh, Belfast, 26th September.

1991 Wexford Adult, Tacumshin, 13th August.

1992 Cork Adult, Youghal, 4th September.

1992 Kerry Adult, Blackrock Strand, 18th to 20th August.

1992 Londonderry Juvenile, Bann Estuary, 31st October.

(Northern North America; winters southern South America) Three in Ireland, but no acceptable records for Britain in 1992 of this species, which appears to be getting rarer here. Does this perhaps suggest temporary population changes in the New World, changed weather patterns or the demise of individuals 'stranded' on this side of the Atlantic for several years?

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 158, 1)

Norfolk Cantley, adult, 18th-20th August (D. J. Holman, J. R. Lausdell *et al.*).

1989 Kent Elmley, juvenile, 27th September to 8th October (M. Dengate, M. J. Wilkinson *et al.*).

1989 Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, 6th-7th September (M. G. Pennington), presumed same as Pool of Virkie, 8th-11th (*Brit. Birds* 83: 462).



157. Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 1992 (Dennis Coutts)

158. Juvenile Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1992 (Dennis Coutts)





159. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Easton Bavents, Suffolk, October 1990 (C. R. Naunton)

1990 Suffolk Easton Bavents, juvenile, 27th October to at least 1st November, photographed (C. R. Naunton) (plate 159).

1991 Devon Northam Burrows, juvenile, 29th September to 3rd October, photographed (M. Preston, M. F. Woolacott *et al.*).

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters South America) Another species that seems to be getting less common in Britain, although there are some records for 1992 which have yet to be submitted.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 137, 4)

Cleveland Greatham Creek and Seal Sands, 3rd-6th June (P. A. A. Baxter, M. Leakey *et al.*).

Humberside Read's Island, Ferriby, 6th June (G. P. Catley).

Norfolk Hickling, 7th June (A. J. Prater). Cley, 1st-2nd July (C. J. Butterworth *et al.*).

1991 Norfolk Breydon, 8th March (P. R. Allard).

(North Eurasia; winters South Asia and Australia) Some records are still to be submitted, but, nevertheless, 1992 was a better year than 1991 and more in keeping with previous years. This species was, however, obviously not influenced by the weather conditions that brought record numbers of other eastern birds to our shores this spring.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 25, 0)

1990 Kent Cliffe, adult, 11th-22nd July (*Brit. Birds* 85: 526), was trapped 12th and now shown not to have been same as 1990 Suffolk individual (*Brit. Birds* 84: 471) (P. Larkin).

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1989 Kerry Adult, Akeragh Lough, 4th to 9th September.

1991 Cork The bird recorded in *Brit. Birds* 85: 526 was present at Rosscarbery from 19th to 20th September and it was seen at Clonakilty on 21st September.

(North America; winters South America) None in Britain or Ireland in 1992, but an interesting change in the statistics for 1990. This species has a pattern of haphazard occurrence here.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (33, 413, -)

1979 Norfolk Hickling, 12th September to 1st October (P. R. Allard, S. E. Linsell, M. J. Seago *et al.*).

(North America; winters southern South America) This species left the Committee's list in 1982.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 68, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 26th, 31st August (C. Bradshaw, M. Wood *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia; winters Africa) This bird brought a degree of disbelief to a Canadian birder on the island at the time, when everyone present formed a 'picket line' and swept across the island until the snipe was refound.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 154, 4)

Northamptonshire Pitsford Reservoir, adult, 10th-12th August, photographed (P. A. Britten, S. R. Mawby *et al.*).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, adult, 21st-23rd May (T. J. Edwards *et al.*) (plate 165).

1990 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, juvenile to first-winter, 15th October to 16th January 1991 (P. N. Collin, S. D. Cooper *et al.*).

1991 Devon Fremington Pill, 19th January to 19th April (D. & S. Churchill, F. A. Dobinson *et al.*), possibly same as Braunton, at least 22nd October 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 471).

1991 Dumfries & Galloway See 1990 above.

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1990-91 Down The first-winter at Belfast Harbour Estate since 27th October 1990 remained to 14th April 1991.

1992 Cork Juvenile, Inchydoney, 27th September to 23rd October.

1992 Dublin Juvenile, Rogerstown, 17th to 26th October; same individual at Swords Estuary, 31st October to 6th November.

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters USA and Central America)
A slight recovery, following only one new individual in 1991.

Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* or *L. griseus* (31, 255, 4)

1990 Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult, 23rd-26th August (P. J. Finden, R. E. Harbird, B. L. Kington *et al.*).

A summer-plumaged adult which never came close enough to be specifically identified. The totals include those specifically identified.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 28, 0)

1973 Yorkshire, North Bolton-on-Swale, 6th August (*Brit. Birds* 67: 321), now considered to be inadequately documented.

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1988 Mayo Lough Leam, The Mullet, 10th October.

1991 Cork The bird recorded in *Brit. Birds* 85: 527 was present from 18th to 24th September.

(North America; winters South America) None in 1992.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 62, 4)

Lincolnshire Bardney, 18th-19th May (K. D. Durose *et al.*) (plate 164).

Norfolk Gunton Park, 20th-22nd May (A. P. Benson, D. A. Bridges, K. Hewitt *et al.*). Holkham, 7th-9th June (V. Eve *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham, 4th July (I. Hunter, T. Squire).

1990 Grampian Cotchill Loch, 15th-16th May (C. Barton, A. G. Clarke *et al.*).

1990 Norfolk Pentney, 17th May (A. Banwell), probably same as Lakenheath Flash, 16th (*Brit. Birds* 84: 472).



160. Adult Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (with Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*) Hartlepool, Cleveland, October 1992 (J. M. Youngs)



161. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Marton Mere, Lancashire, May 1992 (Steve Young)

162. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Tayside, April-May 1992 (D. A. Macleaman)





163. Adult Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Druridge Pools, Northumberland, June 1991 (Ian Fisher)



164. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Bardney, Lincolnshire, May 1992 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)
Adult Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Sidlesham Ferry, West Sussex, May 1992 (Barry Mitchell)



(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia; winters Africa, South Asia and Australia) With the total now standing at nine, 1990 has become the best-ever year for this species.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 182, 10)

Grampian Cult's Reservoir, Aberdeen, 18th-19th May, photographed (D. J. Bain, L. T. A. Brain, K. D. Shaw *et al.*). Loch of Strathbeg, juvenile, 15th August (J. Dunbar, J. D. Poyner).

Lancashire Marton Mere, 5th May, photographed (A. Conway, C. Kchoe, A. Pryce *et al.*) (plate 161).

Norfolk Cley, 28th-29th May (L. G. R. Evans, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

Silly St Mary's, juvenile, 26th August to 22nd September (R. Flood, P. M. Griggs *et al.*).

Western Isles Loch Ordais, Lewis, juvenile, 29th September to 8th October, photographed (R. D. Wemyss *et al.*).

Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, 28th April (N. P. Adams, M. L. Buckland).

1986 Leicestershire Watermead Gravel-pits, first-winter, 14th September (J. Wright).

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1991 Antrim Duncrue Street Marsh, Belfast, 24th September to 12th October.

1991 Cork The following corrections should be made to the dates of the birds referred to in *Brit. Birds* 85: 527. Youghal, 7th to at least 20th September; Ring, Clonakilty, 5th October; Kinsale Marsh, 6th to 27th October. All three were juveniles.

1992 Cork Kinsale Marsh, 3rd to 4th May. Adult, Douglas Estuary, 19th June into 1993.

1992 Londonderry Adult, Lough Beg, 22nd April to 10th May.

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America) An excellent year for the species, with, surprisingly, seven in spring and only three in autumn. The Marton Mere individual was seen on a bird-race; it had previously been identified as a Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, but the above observers reidentified it and then continued with the race.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 22, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile, 13th-15th September (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*) (plate 158).

(North America; winters Central and South America) The first ever for both Fair Isle and Shetland, found at a small puddle by the school.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 36, 1)

Suffolk Southwold, 27th May, photographed (C. R. Naunton).

1990 Hampshire Farlington Marsh, 13th-27th May (M. Collins *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Africa, South Asia and Australia) This single was the only record for 1992. Once again, the paucity of records in a spring noted for eastern vagrants is interesting. Are waders less susceptible to such weather conditions than other groups of birds?

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 98, 3)

Somerset Burnham-on-Sea, juvenile, 27th September to 7th October (B. J. Hill, B. Rabbitts *et al.*); juvenile to adult, 27th October to 1993 (P. A. Amies, B. J. Hill, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Tayside Loch Rannoch, 30th April to 26th May, photographed (A. A. Murray, W. Thompson, T. Vorsterman *et al.*) (plate 162).

1990 Cornwall Lynher Estuary, 28th September (E. H. Williams).

1990 Warwickshire Draycote Water, 29th-30th May (R. Mays, C. D. Toll).

(North America; winters USA south to Uruguay) The long series of sightings at Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, has created a difference of opinion as to whether there were one or two individuals involved; the Committee would be interested in information on this subject. The Tayside bird has followed the recent pattern of summering individuals. It seems obvious that any wintering

'Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*' is worth a careful second look.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 244, 3)

Devon Lundy, juvenile, 27th August to 1st September (A. M. Jewels *et al.*).

1988 Lancashire Leighton Moss, ♀, 24th-25th May, photographed (P. J. Marsh, K. Scovell *et al.*).

1990 Grampian Findhorn Bay, ♀, 16th May (S. Dowden, D. M. Pullan, I. T. Rowlands).

1991 Cheshire Woolston Eyes, first-winter, 19th October to 4th November (D. Bowman, J. R. Dickinson, D. Riley *et al.*).

1991 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, first-winter, 3rd October (P. N. Collin *et al.*).

1991 Fife Eden Estuary, age uncertain, 23rd-24th September (D. Fotheringham, D. Ogilvie).

1991 Lancashire Martin Mere, first-winter, 30th September to 3rd October (R. Pyefinch *et al.*).

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1991 Antrim First-winter, Duncrue Street Marsh, Belfast, 25th September.

1991 Wexford Lady's Island Lake, 28th to 29th September.

1992 Cork First-winter, Ballycotton, 30th August to 5th September.

1992 Down Belfast Harbour Estate, 6th to 7th October.

(North America; winters South America) This species tends to be one of the earliest of the vagrant American waders each autumn. How many are juveniles is difficult to assess, as many past records do not establish the age. There are, however, at least three other August juveniles, on 27th (Cambridgeshire 1979), 26th (Cleveland 1985) and 19th (Lincolnshire 1985), so the Lundy record is not without precedent.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 61, 0)

Norfolk Walcott and Paston area, first-winter, since 25th December 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 528) to 8th January.

1990 Dorset Ferrybridge, adult, 18th March (*Brit. Birds* 85: 553), now considered acceptable (B. Spencer).

1991 Lothian Musselburgh, adult, 26th May (P. R. Bould, B. A. Hickman, Dr L. L. J. Vick).

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1991 Londonderry The two juveniles referred to in *Brit. Birds* 85: 529 have been found unacceptable by the Irish Rare Birds Committee after a review.

1991 Louth The bird referred to in *Brit. Birds* 85: 529 was present from 29th November to 7th December.

(North America; winters USA to South America) The Norfolk individual continued to delight observers in 1992, but this is the first year since 1987 without an acceptable 'new' bird.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 24, 3)

Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, adult, 2nd August (D. Clegg, J. M. Randall).

Lothian Musselburgh, first-summer, 3rd-4th June (T. Gillies, K. Gillon, Dr L. L. J. Vick *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, adult, 21st July (D. & M. D. Abdullah, I. Turner).

1991 Cleveland Reclamation Pond, adult, 19th-23rd June (*Brit. Birds* 85: 529), finder was J. B. Dunnett.

1991 Humberside Flamborough Head, second-summer, 11th August (D. Beaumont, P. A. Lassey, M. Newsome *et al.*).

1991 Sussex, East Newhaven, adult, 4th January (*Brit. Birds* 85: 553), now considered acceptable (N. J. Thomas).

1991 Yorkshire, North Bolton-on-Swale and Scorton, adult, 7th November to 6th December (N. Morgan, R. Taylor).

1991 Yorkshire, South Thrybergh Country Park, adult, 8th December (E. A. Fisher, D. R. Pickering) (fig. 5), presumed same as North Yorkshire.

(North America; winters South America) Another good year for this species.



166. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Suffolk, June 1991 (Jack Levene)

167. Adult, presumed female, Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, Long Nanny, Northumberland, May 1992 (Ian Fisher)





668 & 169. White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* (with Black Tern *C. niger*, above), Kenfig, Mid Glamorgan, May 1992 (above, R. G. Smith; below, Howard Nicholls)



Franklin's Gull (adult winter).

Thrybergh Country Park.

8th December 1991. (1345-1415)

Ashley Fisher.

Mantle, Scapulars & upper-wing dark grey. Thought to be about same tone as "gracillii" Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Striking white "neck-crescent". Smaller, less obvious crescent on near Scapulars.

Eye-crescent, ear coverts, "near crown & nape blackish (not solidly) forming characteristic "half-hood".

Bill quite stout looking. Blackish with obvious red tip at close range.

4 Conspicuous white tips to primaries on folded wing.

Slightly smaller than Black-headed Gull, but chunkier-looking with broader more rounded wings.

Legs slightly shorter compared with Black-headed Gull. Blackish.

Primaries tipped white.

White crescent-shaped bar separating grey of upwing from subterminal black primary markings.

Underwing pattern similar to upper on primaries & secondaries, but grey showing through much paler.

Underwing coverts whitish.

Contrasting white trailing edge

Large white crescents above & below eye.

Tail appeared white

Underparts white.

Neat version of original field sketches

E. A. FISHER

Fig. 5. Adult Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, South Yorkshire, December 1991 (Ashley Fisher)

There have been 15 new individuals in the last six years, compared with 13 Laughing Gulls *L. atricilla* in the same period.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 65, 4)

Cornwall Polruan and Fowey, first-winter, 8th March (S. C. Madge). Camel Estuary, adult, 29th March (S. M. Christophers, P. A. Maker). St John's Lake, adult, 22nd April (S. C. Madge), probably returning individual last recorded Plym Estuary area, Devon, 5th May 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 529).

Warwickshire Draycote Water, first-summer, 24th May (T. Marlow, G. M. Pullan).

1979 Lincolnshire Grimsby Docks, probably first-winter, 17th March (*Brit. Birds* 73: 512), identification no longer supported by G. P. Catley.

1980 Hampshire Farlington Marsh, first-summer, 15th July (*Brit. Birds* 75: 506), now withdrawn by observers; observation of 23rd July not affected.

1990 Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm, adult, 2nd December (*Brit. Birds* 84: 474), was not accepted (*Brit. Birds* 85: 553).

1990 Clwyd See above.

1990 Dorset Portland, first-winter, 2nd March (D. & Mrs M., G. & Mrs S. Walbridge).

1990 Highland Strath Bay, Gairloch, adult, 31st July to 1st August (D. M. Pullan, I. T. Rowlands *et al.*).

1990 Scilly St Mary's and St Martin's, first-winter to adult, 21st March intermittently to 14th October (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

1991 Staffordshire Westport Lake, first-winter, 24th December (W. J. Low).

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1992 Antrim Adult, Randalstown, Lough Neagh, 2nd October.

(North America; winters USA and Mexico) Sorting out returning individuals for this species is quite difficult, especially as most records are grouped in the Southwest. The late acceptances show what a good year 1990 was for this species, with perhaps as many as 11 individuals present.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (0, 614, -)

1985 Yorkshire, North Filey, second-winter, 25th July (P. J. Dunn).

(North America; winters USA to Mexico) Reports after 1987 are not considered by the Committee.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* (0, 13, 0)

IRELAND

One showing the characters of the North American race *L. a. smithsonianus* was recorded as follows:

1991 Antrim First-winter, Belfast Rubbish-tip, 13th March.

(North America) The previous 12, all of which were in Ireland, were listed last year (*Brit. Birds* 85: 529).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* (0, 14, 1)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American race *L. g. kumlieni* were recorded as follows:

Highland Inverness, adult, 2nd January (S. J. Aspinall, R. H. Dennis), presumed same as 1991 Grampian.

1991 Grampian Banff Bay and Harbour, adult, at least 5th January (M. G. Pennington, Dr I. M. Phillips, S. A. Reeves *et al.*), presumed returning individual last recorded 12th April 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 466).

IRELAND

1991 Donegal Two adults, Killybegs, 16th February.

1991 Sligo Adult, Sligo Dump, 2nd February.

1992-93 Cork Adult, The Lough and Dunkettle, 28th December to 31st January 1993.

(Baffin Island and Northwest Ungava Peninsula, Canada; winters North America) With the recent interest in the races of Iceland Gull, including *L. g. thayeri*, shall we soon see the submission of records of immatures?

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 52, 1)

Cleveland Hartlepool, adult, 11th October, photographed (M. A. Blick, B. J. K. Caswell *et al.*) (plate 160).

1975 Cleveland Seaton Carew, first-winter, 8th August (*Brit. Birds* 69: 341), now considered inadequately documented.

IRELAND

1991 Galway Adult, Nimmo's Pier, 6th to 13th January.

(Northeast Siberia and Canada) This delightful gull was found following a prolonged period of good seawatching. Presumably the winds that drove hordes of Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* onto the Northeast coasts also brought this bird into the shelter of Hartlepool Bay.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 36, 1)

Highland Brora, first-summer, 26th March (I. Smitton, A. Vittery).

1991 Grampian Inverallochy, Fraserburgh, first-winter, taken into care injured, 29th December, photographed (L. T. A. Brain, Mrs M. Buchan *et al.*).

(Arctic) It is now seven years since the last accessible mainland bird, in Cleveland in 1986. These are two typical records.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (52, 187, 3)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 27th May (M. Gray).

Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, two adults, 18th August (P. R. Beaumont, S. Cochrane, P. J. Dunn *et al.*).

1960 Lothian Aberlady, then East Lothian, 11th September (*Brit. Birds* 54: 188), now considered inadequately documented.

1966 Lothian Dalmeny, then West Lothian, 3rd September (*Brit. Birds* 60: 321), now considered inadequately documented.

1968 Lothian Aberlady, then East Lothian, 22nd March (*Brit. Birds* 62: 473), now considered inadequately documented.

1969 Central Region Skinflats, then Stirlingshire, 6th September (*Brit. Birds* 63: 280), now considered inadequately documented.

1973 Cleveland Greatham Creek, then Durham, 21st June (*Brit. Birds* 67: 327), now considered inadequately documented.

1973 Durham See 1973 Cleveland above.

1989 Northumberland Cresswell, 1st July (A. D. McLevy).

1990 Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, first-winter, 12th October (B. W. Litherland).

1991 Norfolk Burnham Norton, 14th July (M. E. S. Rooney).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony in Denmark; European population winters Africa) This is the first Orkney record of Gull-billed Tern and only the second for the Northern Isles. Observers would be well advised not to rely on bill shape, but to concentrate more on relative proportions and wing pattern if a record of this notoriously difficult-to-prove species is to be accepted.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 191, 5)

Bedfordshire Priory Country Park, 17th April (D. Kramer), presumed same as Buckinghamshire and Suffolk.

Buckinghamshire Willen Lake, 17th April (M. J. Bodley, P. Price, T. & W. R. Tunnicliffe *et al.*), presumed same as Bedfordshire and Suffolk.

Cheshire Neumann's Flash, Marbury and Great Budworth Meres, 30th-31st May (A. W. P. Hearn, D. J. W. Taylor, D. M. Walters *et al.*).

Dorset Hengistbury Head, 15th August (D. N. Smith).

Humberside Messingham, 23rd June (J. T. Harriman).

Suffolk Lackford, intermittently, 5th-18th April (A. Tate *et al.*) (plates 170-172), presumed also in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.



170-172. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (with Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and Common Teals *Anas crecca*, below), Lackford, Suffolk, April 1992 (above, David Tipling/*Avian*; below, R. C. Wilson)



Yorkshire, North Bolton-on-Swale, 27th May, same, Mickletown Ings. West Yorkshire, 27th N. Morgan *et al.*.

Yorkshire, West See above.

1989 Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig, 11th April (A. Clarke). *

1989 Yorkshire, West Ardsley Reservoir, 23rd May (J. Holliday, J. Martin, D. Woodhead).

1991 Dorset Weymouth and Portland area, adult and juvenile, 13th-15th September (C. E. Richards *et al.*).

1991 Suffolk Covehithe and Benacre, 5th July (J. M. Cawston, E. W. Patrick). Lackford, 23rd July (J. Dorling).

IRELAND

1991 Cork Adult, Rosscarbery, 12th July.

(Almost cosmopolitan except South America, everywhere local; European populations winter in Africa) The Lackford, Suffolk, individual wandered over much of southeast England during its stay. An average year and geographical spread for a species which very rarely strays north of Yorkshire.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (0, 4, 0)

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀, 1st May to 21st July, presumed returning 1991 individual (*Brit. Birds* 85: 530), again paired with Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*, one young raised to flying stage (R. Elliot, G. Taylor, M. Thornton *et al.*), presumed same, Long Nanny, 19th May, photographed (I. Fisher, C. Norman) (plate 167), Newbiggin, 22nd July (A. Priest), also in Suffolk.

Suffolk Minsmere, 4th-6th August (P. Chesbrough, M. L. Cornish *et al.*), presumed same as Northumberland.

1991 Suffolk Benacre, 25th August (H. Parsons, S. E. Pearson, M. J. Thompson), presumed same as Northumberland (*Brit. Birds* 85: 530-531).

1991 Yorkshire, North Filey, 24th August (C. C. Thomas *et al.*), presumed same as Northumberland (*Brit. Birds* 85: 530-531).

(North and East Africa, east to Australia; winter quarters uncertain) The ninth year in residence (and she also returned in 1993) for the Farne Islands' bird, once again raising a hybrid young which may yet return to baffle us.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 20, 1)

Merseyside Formby Point, adult, 16th August (Dr B. McCarthy).

IRELAND

1991-92-93 Down The bird recorded in *Brit. Birds* 85: 531 was present to 8th March. What was probably the same individual was present in the same area from 8th November 1992 into 1993.

(North America; winters USA and Mexico) The Irish Sea is very much the hot-spot for this species, which regularly appears on both coasts. Although a winter-plumaged individual is easy to identify when it is the only tern on the beach in January, an observer who picks one out of a passage of terns in August is to be congratulated.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 85, 0)

1964 Cleveland Coatham Sands, then North Yorkshire, 30th August (*Brit. Birds* 58: 363), now considered inadequately documented.

1964 Yorkshire, North See above.

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia; European birds winter in Africa) It is amazing that in the best-ever year for White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus* no Whiskered hitched a lift with a flock of its relatives. This was not mirrored in the rest of Europe, with records the highest ever in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Latvia, and breeding numbers the highest ever in Poland. This is the third consecutive blank year in Britain and Ireland.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 540, 42)**Berkshire** Theale, second-summer, 18th May (P. E. Standley, B. Uttley *et al.*).**Cheshire** Neumann's Flash, second-summer, 8th May (P. E. Kenyon).**Cumbria** Carr Beds, near Rockcliffe, two, 18th-19th May, photographed (A. Cremin *et al.*).**Devon** Plymstock, adult, 26th-28th July, photographed (P. T. Molyneux *et al.*).**Dorset** Lodmoor, adult, 29th September (U. Löfberg). Stanpit Marsh, adult, 22nd August (L. Chappell).**Essex** Hanningfield Reservoir, three, 18th May (J. Miller, J. T. Smith). Abberton Reservoir, adult or second-summer, 29th July (D. & Mrs A. A. Adams, B. Smith); juvenile, 24th-31st August (A. Kettle, R. V. A. Marshall, J. Norgate *et al.*). Canvey Island, juvenile, 11th September (J. Saward).**Fife** Fife Ness, 31st May (D. Simpson, S. Taylor).**Glamorgan, Mid** Kenfig, three, 18th May, photographed (C. Hurford, P. Jones, K. Luxford *et al.*) (plates 168 & 169).**Gloucestershire** Slimbridge, two juveniles, 9th August (L. P. Alder).**Grampian** Loch of Strathbeg, 23rd May, photographed (K. Munday *et al.*).**Greater London** William Girling Reservoir, juvenile, 13th-14th September (B. Reed *et al.*).**Hampshire** Fleet Pond, juvenile, 22nd August (J. M. Clark, J. Dixon, G. C. Stephenson *et al.*).**Hereford & Worcester** Westwood Pool, Droitwich and Wilden Lagoons, Kidderminster, adult, 11th September (G. & W. F. Peplow, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).**Kent** Swale, two, 18th-19th May, photographed (C. G. Bradshaw *et al.*). Dungeness, first-winter, 24th September (D. Okines, D. Walker).**Leicestershire** Rutland Water, juvenile, 11th-13th September (A. H. J. Harrop, C. Lythall *et al.*).**Lincolnshire** Covenham Reservoir, juvenile, 23rd August to 2nd September (G. P. Catley, D. Jenkins, A. C. Sims *et al.*).**Northamptonshire** Daventry Reservoir Country Park, 18th May (D. G. Carrington *et al.*). Pitsford Reservoir, three, 19th May, photographed (R. W. Bullock, D. J. Lewis *et al.*); juvenile, 12th-13th September (P. A. Britten, S. F. Coles, A. D. J. Cook *et al.*). Earl's Barton, juvenile, 14th August (P. A. Britten, K. Taylor, M. Williams *et al.*).**Nottinghamshire** Lound, 16th May, photographed (G. Hobson, R. Marshall *et al.*); adult, 11th September (G. Barlow, P. Palmer).**Somerset** Combwich, juvenile, 4th-7th October, presumed same, Durleigh Reservoir, 8th-23rd (C. F. S. Avent, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).**Staffordshire** Behide Reservoir, adult, 8th August (J. K. Higginson *et al.*).**Strathclyde** Baron's Haugh, adult, 3rd-7th August, photographed (S. Clifton, I. English, R. G. Nisbett *et al.*).**Sussex, East** Pett Level, adult, 26th August (J. A. B. Gale), presumed same, Rye, 28th to 4th September (R. G. Harris *et al.*).**Sussex, West** Chichester Harbour, adult, 14th-15th May (C. B. Collins).**1989 Kent** Dungeness, juvenile, 5th-11th September (*Brit. Birds* 83: 469), observer was D. Walker.**1990 Lancashire** Leighton Moss and Dockacre Gravel-pits, adult or second-summer, 15th-16th July (*Brit. Birds* 85: 531), 15th only.**1991 Devon** Slapton Ley, second-summer, 1st-2nd June (J. F. Babbington, R. W. White).**1991 Essex/Suffolk** Gibbonsgate Lake, near Flatford Mill and River Stour, near Cattawade, two, 2nd-4th June, photographed (R. Allan, Dr M. F. M. Bamford, D. R. Moore *et al.*) (fig. 6, page 494; plate 166).**1991 Gwent** Llandegfedd Reservoir, 29th-31st May, photographed (J. R. Bennett *et al.*).**1991 Hampshire** Blashford Gravel-pit, juvenile, 22nd-25th September (A. I. Prophet *et al.*).**1991 Highland** Loch of Mey and St John's Loch, 7th-12th June (J. Smith).**1991 Suffolk** See Essex/Suffolk above.

IRELAND

1991 Wexford The bird referred to in *Brit. Birds* 85: 531 was an adult and was first seen at Lady's Island Lake from 9th to 10th August; it then moved to Tacumshin and was there to at least 17th August. Juvenile, Tacumshin, 17th-24th August, it or another at Lady's Island Lake on 14th and 29th September and at the Cull on 14th and 28th September, Kilmore Quay on 5th October and Tacumshin on 6th October. It seems certain that two juveniles were involved in this series of sightings.**1992 Clare** Adult, Lough O'Grady, 1st June.

Top two views of same bird
 Typical ad sum, white forewing contrasting
 with black mantle, black underwing
 red feet + legs, dark reddish black bill.
 very dashing aerobic flight.



Other bird not quite so neat
 starting moult?
 Greyish tail, dark bar on secondaries
 towards mantle



underwing rather patchy
 black + white and
 underpart a more
 dusky black, pale
 around bill and
 cheeks.

4th June '91
 Zad Sum White-winged
 Black Terns
 hawking over Gibbonsgate
 Lake near Flatford +
 lake along R. Stour
 Cattawade

Fig. 6. Two White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Essex/Suffolk, June 1991 (Richard Allen)

(Southeast Europe, Asia and Africa; European birds winter Africa) An astounding year for this species broke both spring and annual records. At least 21 occurred in spring, with 15 arriving on 18th-19th May, including three groups of three; a further 21 or more were seen in autumn. Interestingly, the sole Irish record was the latest of the spring crop, and the only June record.



173 & 174. Juvenile Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, Aldeburgh, Suffolk, November 1992
(Jack Levene)



175. Below, juvenile European Roller *Coracias garrulus*, Orfordness, Suffolk, September 1991 (Jack Levene)



Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (2, 25, 1)**Western Isles** Hirta, St Kilda, 26th May (T. J. Dix), same, 6th June (J. Vaughan).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Still a very rare bird, though logic suggests that it should winter in northern waters in some numbers. Where are they all?

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* (0, 1, 0)**Devon** Lundy, 30th March to 29th April (R. H. C. Bonser, N. J. Hallam, A. M. Jewels *et al.*), presumed returning 1991 individual (*Brit. Birds* 85: 532).

(Pacific seaboard of Alaska and Northeast Siberia; winters North Pacific) There is something peculiarly British about the term 'presumed returning individual'. If another turns up on Lundy, it will be as unlikely as the second coming of the Dodo *Raphus cucullatus*.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (0, 1, 0)**1989 Man, Isle of** Calf of Man, trapped, 31st October, photographed, found dead 1st November, now at Manx Museum (A. Sapsford, K. Scott).

(North and Central America south to Panama) The first record for the Western Palearctic. A short-distance migrant within its native range, northern birds move south to winter well within the range. Not included by Robbins (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457) among the 38 most-likely candidates for an autumn transatlantic flight, but mentioned as a probable for a successful crossing.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 28, 2)**Norfolk** Cley, juvenile, 7th July (P. E. Beard), same, Blakeney Point, 7th-11th (R. Gilbert, D. McNeil *et al.*).**Suffolk** Aldeburgh, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 29th October to 12th November (Mr & Mrs J. R. Pilkington *et al.*) (plates 173 & 174).**1990 Devon** Dawlish Warren, 20th-28th March, dead 29th (K. R. Grant *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 298).**1990 Kent** Sandwich Bay, dead, 25th March, skin retained by E. Robson (W. E. Fletcher *et al.*).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) Two records in a year is about the average, though 1991 was blank. At least two of the previous March records have been of birds which have subsequently died (or been found dead), presumably from starvation. The July record is only the third in mid summer.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 20, 0)**1986 Orkney** Papa Westray, 24th June to 11th July, trapped 1st July, found dead 12th, photographed, remains retained by E. R. Meek (M. Gray, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

(South Europe, Russia, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) This belated acceptance takes the total of records since the formation of the Committee in 1958 to 20 (i.e. an occurrence rate of one every 21 months). Prior to 1958 there were 64 records, so this clearly reflects a downward trend. The third record for Orkney; the previous ones were in June 1965 and November 1970.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 102, 2)**Shetland** Fetlar, two ♀♀, from 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 532), to 29th March, one to 13th May, other, Unst, 8th April to 17th May (per D. Suddaby), probably one of same, Dales Voe, Mainland, 27th May (T. R. Cleeves, K. D. Shaw).**Western Isles** Balamald, North Uist, ♂, 30th-31st May, taken into care injured, died 9th June, now at Glasgow Museum (T. J. Dix, S. Parish *et al.*).

1990 Grampian/Highland Ben Macdui area, ♀, 17th May to 28th August, 16th December (R. Smith), presumed returning individual of 21st June to 4th September 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 470).

1991 Grampian/Highland Ben Macdui area, ♀, 15th April (R. Smith), presumed returning 1990 individual.

IRELAND

1992 Mayo Achill, 19th February.

(Circumpolar Arctic; disperses south in some winters) The fate of the male in the Western Isles is particularly regrettable as the preponderance of females continues. He had been ringed at Stavanger, Norway (exact date not yet known), so the possibility of further recruitment from the north to our ageing and declining outpost still exists. In addition to the above records, an adult female came aboard a Spanish fishing vessel about 320 km east of Newfoundland and was eventually brought ashore at Aberdeen on 2nd July; she was found to be in good health, was released on 3rd, and was last seen on 4th. A June report from North Uist, Western Isles, remains to be assessed by the Committee.

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* (0, 5, 0)

1991 Fife St Andrews, 8th-10th November, photographed (Dr R. W. Byrne, D. E. Dickson, Dr J. Graves *et al.*) (plates 180 & 181).

(North America; winters to central South America) The fourth record (fifth individual) for the British Isles since the first in 1982, and the first for Scotland; previous records were from Cornwall and Scilly; all have been in October or November. A further record from 1983 remains under consideration.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 303, 16)

Cornwall Loc Bar, 11th April (J. S. Gilbert, P. Kemp).

Devon Bideford, 25th April (M. C. Dennis, A. S. Hall).

Dorset Branksome Chine, 26th April (J. H. Blackburn).

Kent Foreness, 22nd-23rd April (S. D. W. Mount *et al.*); second individual, 23rd (T. M. Blackburn, M. McCarthy, D. McKee *et al.*); presumed one of same, Minnis Bay, 23rd (T. N. Hodge *et al.*). Dungeness, 2nd May (P. G. Akers); probably same, Folkestone, 2nd-3rd (I. A. Roberts, J. P. Siddle *et al.*), Dover, 3rd (per D. W. Taylor), Minnis Bay and Reculver, 4th (T. N. Hodge, C. Osborne).

Suffolk Dunwich, 23rd May (B. J. Small) (fig. 7).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 18th August (D. P. Dunk).

Wight, Isle of Ventnor, 23rd April (A. Butler).

1988 Sussex, East Beachy Head, 27th March (P. M. Leonard, A. Tagg).

1990 Essex Shoeburyness, 22nd March (P. Collins).

1990 Hampshire Titchfield, in office building, 26th March, photographed (D. S. Foot, C. Savage *et al.*).

1990 Kent St Margaret's, 4th October (I. P. Hodgson).

1991 Cornwall Lamorna, 6th July (B. D. Blowers).

1991 Suffolk Landguard, 11th July (A. Bimpson *et al.*).

IRELAND

1992 Dublin Dun Laoghaire, 19th to 20th March. Five, Killiney, 20th March. Howth Head, 27th May.

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa; winters Africa) There were also belated records from the Channel Islands, with singles at St Clement, Jersey, on 1st October 1987 and another on Jersey on 27th March 1990.

Continued on page 500



176. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 1992 (Ian Fisher)

177. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 1992 (Dennis Coultts)



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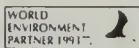
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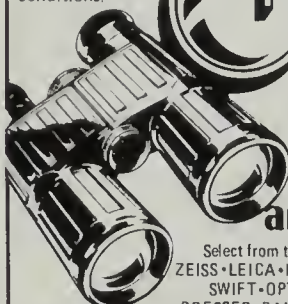


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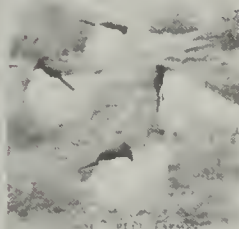
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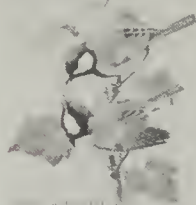


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178. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Mizen Head, Co. Cork, October 1992 (Anthony McGeehan)

179. First-winter Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, St Mary's, Scilly, September 1992 (David Rimes)



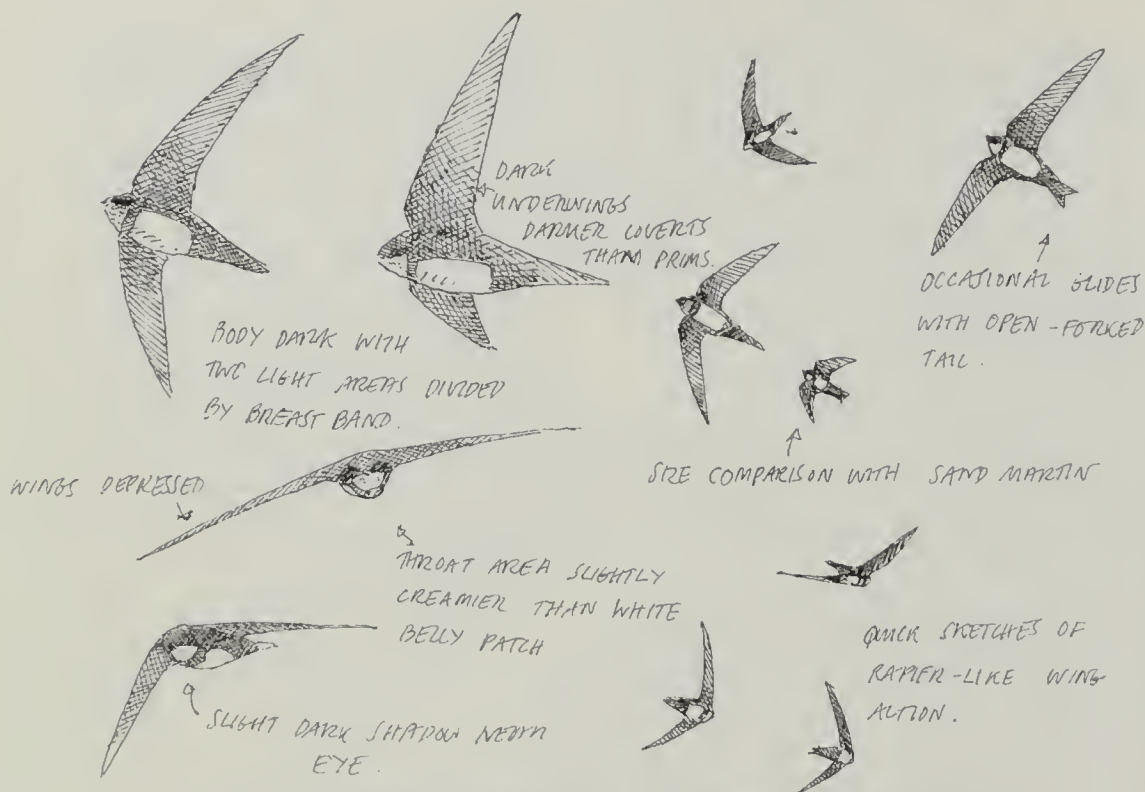


Fig. 7. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, Dunwich, Suffolk, May 1992 (B. J. Small)

The British total of nine is a good average and a great improvement on last year. The complete absence of any in autumn is noteworthy. Details of a long-staying individual in May and early June in Borders have not yet been received.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (154, 327, -)

1989 Kent Foreness, 21th May (S. D. W. Mount).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) A belated acceptance is of one in the Channel Islands, at L'Etacq, Jersey, on 22nd July 1989. This species was dropped from the list of species considered by the Committee at the end of 1990.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 85, 2)

Cumbria North Walney, 27th June (T. Jones, C. Raven *et al.*).

Strathclyde Gott Bay, Tiree, 20th May (J. E. R. Allen, Dr D. Lewis).

1991 Suffolk Orfordness, juvenile, 8th-12th September, photographed (D. Crawshaw, M. D. Crewe *et al.*) (plate 175).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) Two records is about the average number per year of this very colourful rarity, and they are on fairly typical dates. The Strathclyde bird is the twentieth in Scotland since 1958. Details of one in Kent in June have not yet been received for consideration.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* (0, 1, 0)

1987 Devon Lundy, 24th-25th April (C. McShane, K. J. Mitchell, A. J. Wood).

(North America, winters south to Mexico) The first record for the Western Palearctic. A relatively short-distance migrant within its native range and not greatly anticipated on this side of the Atlantic, although it has made it to the

Bahamas in the past. It was not included among Chandler S. Robbins's 38 most-likely candidates for an autumn transatlantic flight (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457). A record from south Devon two days prior to this one remains under consideration.



180 & 181. Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*, St Andrews, Fife, November 1991 (*above*, D. E. Dickson; *below*, Mary Macintyre) see page 497



Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 353, 19)**Cornwall** Rame Head, 30th September to 2nd October (S. Bird, R. Eynon, V. R. Tucker *et al.*).**Humberside** Spurn, trapped, 12th January, photographed (J. Cudworth, G. E. Dobbs *et al.*).**Norfolk** Blakeney Point, 4th May (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart).**Scilly** St Mary's, 21st to at least 25th April (G. C. Stephenson *et al.*); 20th-24th September (P. D. Hyde *et al.*); 3rd-12th October (D. E. Balmer, I. Lakin, M. A. Newell *et al.*) (plate 113). Bryher, 20th May (Miss C. E. Lankester, K. Pellow).**Shetland** Baltasound, Unst, 1st May (L. Leask, M. J. McLeod, M. G. Pennington *et al.*). Fair Isle, 18th-19th May (P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Sumburgh, 24th-25th May (R. A. Matthews, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Northdale, Unst, 23rd-30th September (T. Hutchinson, M. Jones *et al.*). Seatness, 24th-25th September (G. J. Hinchon *et al.*), same, Sumburgh Head, 26th-28th (per D. Suddaby). Virkie, two, 27th September, presumed one of same, 29th (J. N. Dymond *et al.*). Fair Isle, 2nd October (N. J. Riddiford). Whalsay, 7th October (K. Osborn). Fetlar, 3rd-16th October (B. Thomason).**Suffolk** Landguard, 23rd-25th September (M. L. Cornish, N. Odin *et al.*).**Yorkshire, North** Filey, 16th May (J. W. Cooper, W. Hill, J. Hilcox *et al.*).**1991 Dorset** Hengistbury Head, 29th October (G. Armstrong *et al.*).**1991 Hertfordshire** Tyttenhanger Gravel-pit, 7th-10th May (G. J. White *et al.*).**1991 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 14th-20th September (J. C. Lamplough, P. A. Lassey, M. Newsome *et al.*).**1991 Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 7th-20th October, two, 10th-15th, three, 12th (*Brit. Birds* 85: 534) as stated, but differing individual 8th, giving total of four.**1991 Sussex, West** East Head, Chichester Harbour, 26th June to 4th July (S. J. Aspinall, G. Cockburn, B. F. Forbes *et al.*).

(South Eurasia; winters North Africa) Another good showing with most in the expected peak times of May and September-October. Midsummer and midwinter records are exceptional, so the West Sussex and Humberside records are particularly notable; the Humberside record was of a bird of one of the grey eastern (but indeterminate in the field) races, and is also only the second in January. Records of this species will cease to be considered by the Committee from the end of December 1993.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 224, 11)**Bedfordshire** South Mills, 19th May (P. Oldfield).**Berkshire** Theale, 2nd May (H. Netley).**Dorset** Portland, 29th April (M. Cade, G. L. Webber, I. Weston).**Essex** Hainault Forest, 23rd May (M. K. Dennis).**Hereford & Worcester** Upton Warren, 1st-2nd May, photographed (S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).**Kent** Folkestone, 23rd May (I. A. Roberts).**Norfolk** Sheringham, 7th October (K. B. Shepherd, S. C. Votier).**Suffolk** Southwold, 29th May (T. North).**Sussex, West** Pagham Harbour, 3rd May (S. Phipps).**Wight, Isle of** Havenstreet, 4th May (J. C. Gloyd, D. J. & M. Humbybun, G. & M. Sparshott *et al.*).**Yorkshire, North** Filey, 31st May (L. Gillard).**1988 Avon** New Passage, 22nd April (N. T. Lacy).**1989 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 15th April (D. G. Hobson).**1990 Avon** Chew Valley Lake, 20th October (R. Palmer *et al.*).**1991 Cornwall** Marazion, 14th April (E. J. Cook, R. J. Lee).**1991 Dorset** Portland, 17th June (G. Walbridge).**1991 Kent** Stodmarsh area, 14th-18th June (D. C. Gilbert *et al.*).**1991 Scilly** Bryher, 24th April (R. G. W. Heselden) (fig. 8).**1991 Suffolk** Thorpeness, 15th May (J. Briant, R. Glover).

(South and East Eurasia and Africa; winters Africa) A relatively poor showing compared with the high numbers of the 1987-90 period, and all except one were in spring. The late acceptance of the five 1991 records moves the total for that year on to seven.

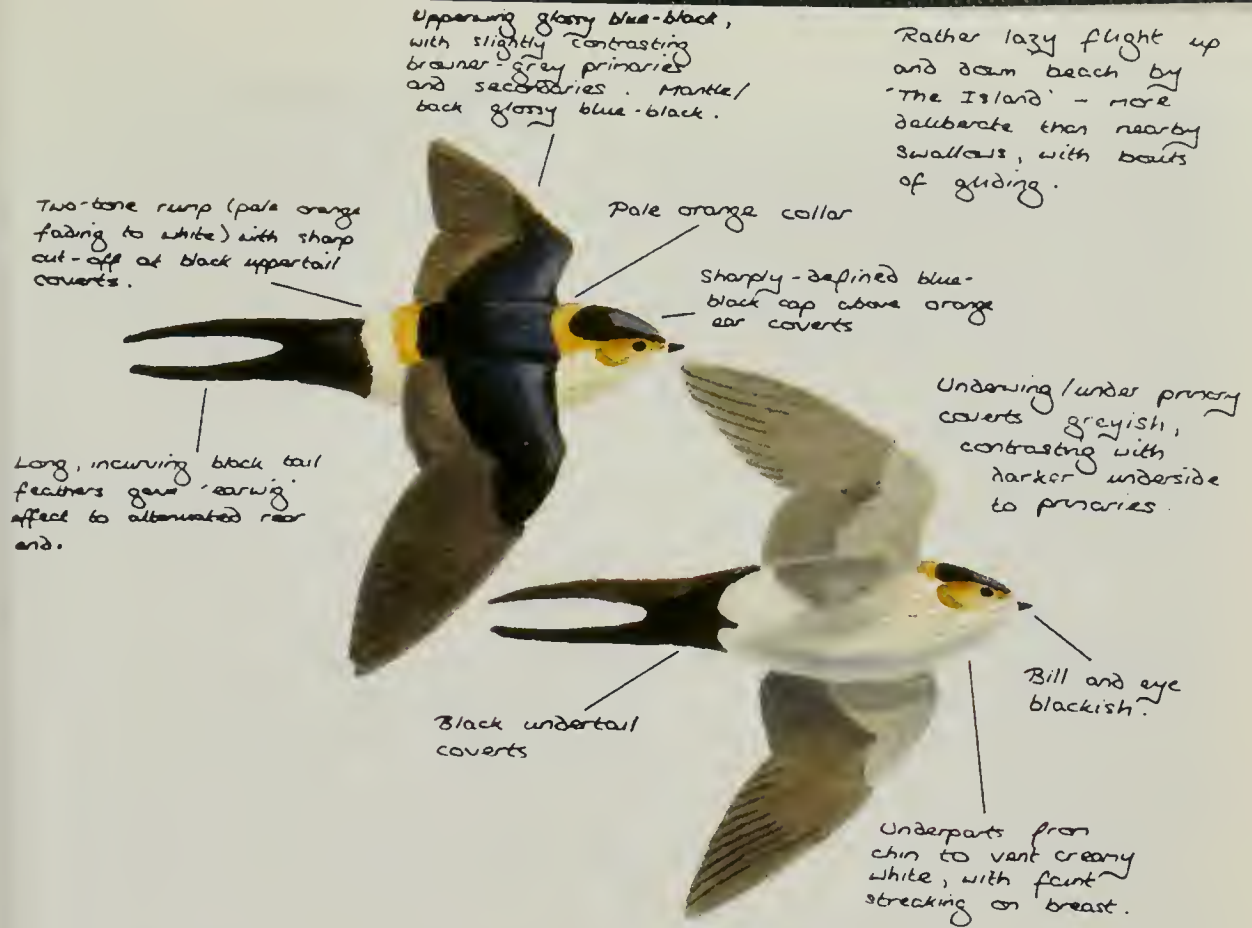


Fig. 8. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Bryher, Scilly, April 1991 (R. G. W. Heselden)

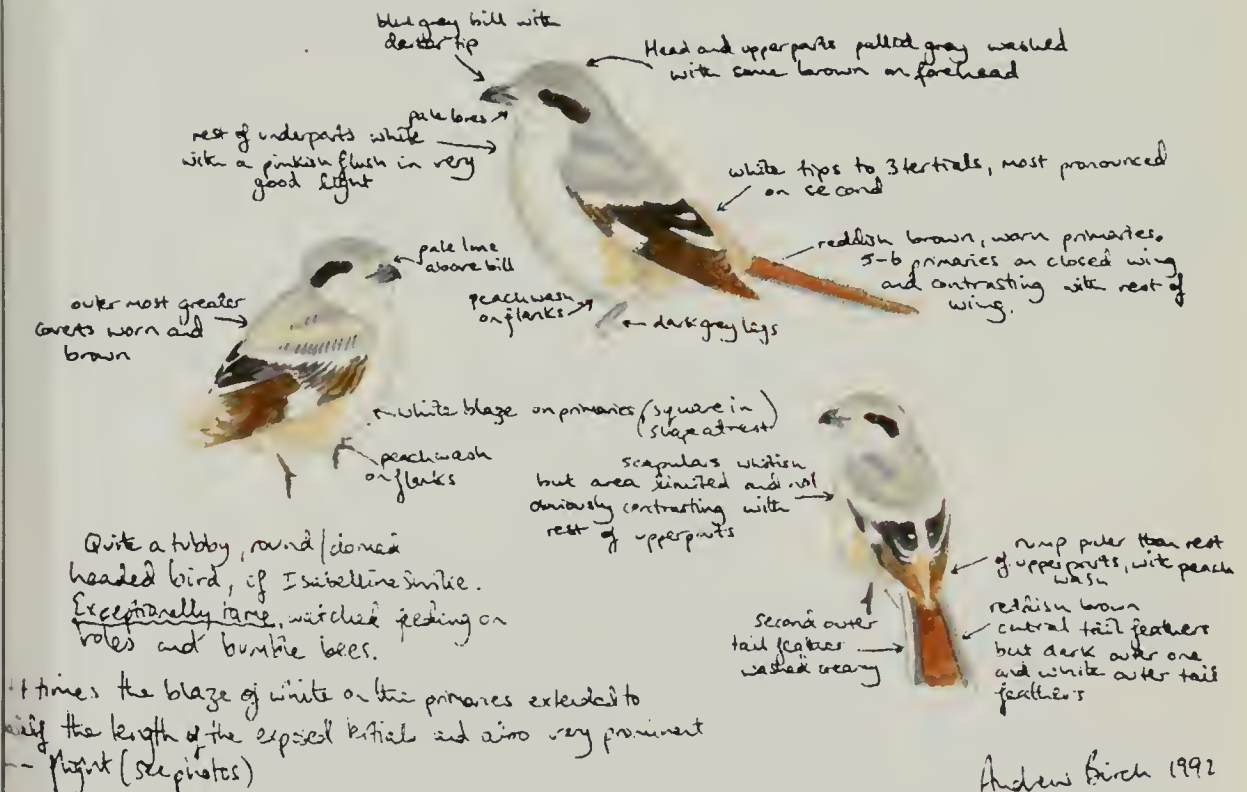


Fig. 9. Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* of southern/eastern Siberian race *pallidirostris*, Cornwall, April 1992 (Andrew Birch) see page 524

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (120, 500, -)

1968 Cleveland Teesmouth, then Co. Durham, three, 27th October (*Brit. Birds* 62: 483), now considered inadequately documented.

1968 Durham See above.

(Europe, South Asia and Northwest Africa) This species was removed from the list of species considered by the Committee at the end of 1982.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 130, 16)

Dorset Portland, 5th October (G. Walbridge).

Greater London Woodford Green, 23rd-26th October (K. Murray *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 12th October (G. P. Catley).

Norfolk Great Yarmouth, 13th October (P. C. Noakes *et al.*). Holkham Meads, 5th-10th October (V. Eve, M. E. S. Rooney, R. Q. Skeen *et al.*); another, 15th (J. B. Kemp).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 27th September (M. Gray).

Shetland Fair Isle, at least five: 1st-15th October, photographed (J. R. Higgott, C. J. Orsman *et al.*; plate 177; 3rd to at least 5th October (D. Suddaby *et al.*); 4th-7th October (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); another two, possibly three, 4th (R. Minshull, N. J. & Mrs E. A. Riddiford). Fetlar, two, 3rd-4th October (A. Aitken, B. Thomason). Lerwick, 4th October (K. Hudson, K. Osborn).

1988 Shetland Strand, 29th October (D. R. Bird, P. V. Harvey).

1990 Shetland Vidlin, 3rd-5th October (*Brit. Birds* 84: 481), to 8th. Kergord, two, 3rd-4th October (*Brit. Birds* 84: 481), two to 5th, one to 7th (per D. Suddaby).

IRELAND

1992 Cork Dursey Island, 5th October.

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters Southern Asia) Another below-average showing in contrast to the numbers of records in the late 1980s and in 1990 in particular, for which, with the late acceptances given here, the total now moves to 48. All records here (several remain to be reported) conformed to the almost predictable late-September to November period of occurrence. Given a favourable following wind from the east, this species is almost guaranteeable somewhere along the East Coast. Long gone are the days when this and the following species were mentioned in the same hushed tones of reverence and wonder.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 28, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, trapped, 15th October, photographed (P. V. Harvey, C. J. Orsman, A. Prior *et al.*; plate 176).

(Northeast Russia, Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) The date is towards the end of the expected period of occurrence at Britain's premier Pechora stopping-off point; in recent years, there has been a significant trend of occurrences away from Fair Isle, but this must be seen as a return to the earlier pattern of records. Perhaps, one day, radio-tracking will reveal some of their secrets, particularly where they go to after Fair Isle or where else they lurk in autumn, safe in secret hiding places.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 219, 42)

Cleveland Cowpen Marsh, 24th May (G. Icton *et al.*).

Dorset Lodmoor, 1st-2nd October (D. J. Chown *et al.*). Portland, 4th October (G. Walbridge).

Dyfed Skokholm, 17th September (M. Betts); 27th (M. & P. Betts, J. E. & J. W. Donovan).

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig, 3rd May (C. Baker, S. J. Moon).

Greater London Barn Elms Reservoirs, 28th September (R. B. Hastings *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, 22nd-25th May (D. P. Boyle *et al.*); 23rd-30th (D. P. Boyle, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Kent Foreness, 17th May (K. D. Lord, S. D. W. Munn).

- Lincolnshire** Gibraltar Point, in song, 26th-28th May (P. M. Troake, R. K. Watson, K. M. Wilson).
- Merseyside** Red Rocks, 15th May (M. G. & Dr J. E. Turner, E. Williams). Seaforth, in song, 25th May, photographed (J. Dempsey, C. Kehoe, S. White *et al.*).
- Norfolk** Happisburgh, 14th May; 14th-18th; 15th-17th (G. M. Cresswell, M. Fiszer *et al.*). Cley, 14th-15th May (A. P. Benson, S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*). Blakeney Point, 14th May (M. S. Cavanagh, A. M. Stoddart); 26th-28th, two, 27th-28th (G. M. Cresswell, S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Welney, 21st May (J. B. Kemp). Breydon, 23rd May (P. R. Allard). Weybourne, 26th May (T. Wright). Sheringham, 3rd October (K. B. Shepherd).
- Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 31st May to 1st June (K. A. Wilson *et al.*); 30th September (A. Banwell, M. Gray, F. Maroevic *et al.*). Stronsay, 2nd October (J. W. N. Andrews, J. F. Holloway).
- Scilly** St Mary's, 4th October (A. Blagden, C. & D. K. Lamsdell, R. Overton *et al.*). Tresco, 13th-16th October (S. J. Broyd *et al.*) (plate 112).
- Shetland** Fair Isle, ten: at least 17th May (S. C. Votier *et al.*); 19th-23rd, trapped 21st (P. V. Harvey, S. C. Votier *et al.*); 24th-25th (S. C. Votier *et al.*); 27th (K. Bowey, P. V. Harvey); 27th-28th (S. C. Votier *et al.*); 27th-28th (K. Bowey, P. V. Harvey, S. C. Votier *et al.*); 29th (S. C. Votier); 30th-31st (I. Brown, T. Sweetland *et al.*); presumed another, 31st (R. Taylor); 30th September to 1st October (N. C. Green, D. Rhymes *et al.*). Fetlar, in song, 4th-25th June, photographed (J. & Mrs I. Miller, A. Stanbury, B. Thomason *et al.*). Catfirth, 21st September (C. Byers, P. V. Hayman *et al.*).
- Suffolk** Shingle Street, 11th October (M. D. Crewe).
- 1988 Devon** Ernesettle, 14th October (E. Griffiths).
- 1990 Cornwall** Marazion, 14th May (M. P. Semmens).
- 1990 Greater Manchester** Ladybrook Valley, Cheadle Hulme, 14th October (G. Lightfoot).
- 1991 Cambridgeshire** Northey Fen, Nene Washes, 26th May (M. & S. Davies, R. Davis, Mrs H. J. Welch *et al.*).
- 1991 Dyfed** Skomer, 6th-8th September (Miss K. E. Lawrence, J. Parke, S. J. & Mrs A. C. Sutcliffe *et al.*).
- 1991 Scilly** St Mary's, at least 11th-12th December (D. J. D. Hickman, W. H. Wagstaff).
- 1991 Tyne & Wear** Ryhope, 20th May (S. J. Ling *et al.*).

(Arctic Eurasia; winters India and Africa) Following on from the good numbers in 1991, which, with the four late acceptances given here, achieved a total of 16, a record high, the year 1992 can be considered outstanding, with over 40 records. Almost three-quarters of this total occurred in May and just over one quarter were in September and October. Inland records are exceptional, but the Greater London record is the sixth, and the second at that locality. The comment in last year's report regarding those who have heard this species sing in Britain may now be redundant; this year's deluge of records has enabled several observers in Merseyside and Shetland to be added to the list.

Several records, particularly in spring, remain to be reported and the Committee would welcome details of any record not included above.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 56, 3)

- Scilly** St Mary's, first-winter, 13th-16th September, photographed (N. Benson, D. N. T. Rimes, M. Rose *et al.*) (plate 179).
- Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, 5th September (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington, S. C. Votier). Seafield, Lerwick, first-winter, 30th September (P. V. Hayman, K. Hudson, K. Osborn).

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia; winters Southern and Southeast Asia) Three records, at very traditional sites, are the average for this scarce wagtail. Two records in Scilly (in 1978 and 1979) and one in the Western Isles in September 1992 remain under consideration.



182. First-winter Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 1992 (*Dennis Coult*)

183. First-winter Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 1992 (*R. Chittenden*) (see also plate 185)



Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 92, 5)

Norfolk Gramborough Hill, Salthouse, 26th September (R. C. Abel, M. J. Saunt *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-summer, trapped, 25th May, photographed (M. Gray, A. Mitchell, D. Patterson). Deerness, first-winter, trapped, 1st September (C. J. Corse *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer, trapped, 5th June (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington, R. Taylor *et al.*); first-winter, 18th-20th September, trapped 18th (J. Coutts, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*) (plate 192).

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia; winters Africa) A good showing, in contrast to the previous two years, including the third for Orkney. The Norfolk bird was very obliging, sitting in a small bush for most of its stay and frequently offering good views. Details of one at Holkham, Norfolk, have yet to be reported to the Committee.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (1, 173, 15)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stjænegeri* were recorded as follows:

Humberside Dane's Dyke, Flamborough, ♀ or immature, 19th October (D. Bywater). Spurn, first-winter ♀, trapped, 8th October, photographed (J. Cudworth *et al.*); ♀ or immature, 8th-22nd, trapped 8th (T. Collins, J. Cudworth, P. Hazard *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, ♀ or immature, 1st-4th October, photographed (J. W. N. Andrews, J. F. Holloway, M. Johnson); ♂, 3rd-4th October, photographed (J. W. N. Andrews, J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway).

Scilly St Martin's, ♀ or immature, 7th October (C. & D. K. Lamsdell).

Shetland Sumburgh, ♂, 30th September to 14th October (M. Edgecombe *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♀ or immature, 6th October (M. G. & Dr J. E. Turner). Gruiness, first-winter ♂, 7th-16th October (J. Clifton *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, ♂, 12th-19th October (P. J. Dunn, L. Gillard, A. Norris *et al.*) (fig. 10).

1989 Norfolk Holkham Meals, ♀ or immature, 10th-17th September (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1990 Dorset Hengistbury Head, ♂, 7th October (P. Brash, M. J. Gibbons *et al.*).

1990 Kent Foreness, ♀ or immature, 9th-10th November (K. Evans, K. D. Lord).

1990 Northumberland Newbiggin, ♂, 20th October (M. Henry, S. Sexton).

1991 Borders St Abb's Head, ♀ or immature, 26th-29th October (D. Graham, R. D. Murray *et al.*).

1991 Cornwall Kenidjack, ♀ or immature, 10th-15th October (S. M. Christophers *et al.*); ♂, 15th-21st November (J. F. Ryan, M. P. Semmens *et al.*). The Lizard, first-winter ♂, 15th October (A. R. Pay *et al.*).

1991 Dyfed Skokholm, ♀ or immature, 11th-15th October (M. Betts).

1991 Grampian Rattray Head, ♂, 28th September (T. W. Marshall, S. A. Reeves).

1991 Humberside Spurn, ♀ or immature, 29th to at least 30th September (J. McLoughlin *et al.*). Easington, ♀ or immature, 13th to at least 17th October (A. J. Booth, D. Hursthouse, J. McLoughlin *et al.*).

1991 Norfolk Blakeney Point, first-winter ♂ and ♀ or immature, 29th-30th September (G. M. Cresswell, M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*); ♀ or immature, 21st October (P. J. Heath, A. M. Stoddart). Breydon, ♀ or immature, 7th-11th October, photographed (P. R. Allard, K. R. Dye *et al.*). Titchwell, ♀ or immature, 11th-13th October (R. Q. Skeen *et al.*). Sheringham, ♀ or immature, 22nd-24th October (M. Young-Powell *et al.*).

1991 Shetland Fair Isle, five ♀♀ or immatures: two, 26th October (P. V. Harvey, C. J. Orsman *et al.*); 27th (H. R. Harrop, P. V. Harvey *et al.*); 30th (H. R. Harrop); trapped, 9th November, photographed (H. R. Harrop, C. J. Orsman *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, first-winter ♂, 20th-22nd September (C. Donald, R. Proctor *et al.*). Gruiness, ♀ or immature, 11th October (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Boddam, ♀ or immature, 20th October (M. Mellor).

1991 Suffolk Lowestoft, ♀♀ or immatures, 5th October; 21st-25th (the late P. Gill *et al.*). Walberswick, ♀ or immature, 26th October (A. A. K. Lancaster).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia, East Caucasia and Northern Iran) The comments in last year's report (*Brit. Birds* 85: 537) regarding 1991 should now be deleted, as, with the inclusion of these late submissions and acceptances, both 1991 and 1992 were very good years. The revised totals for

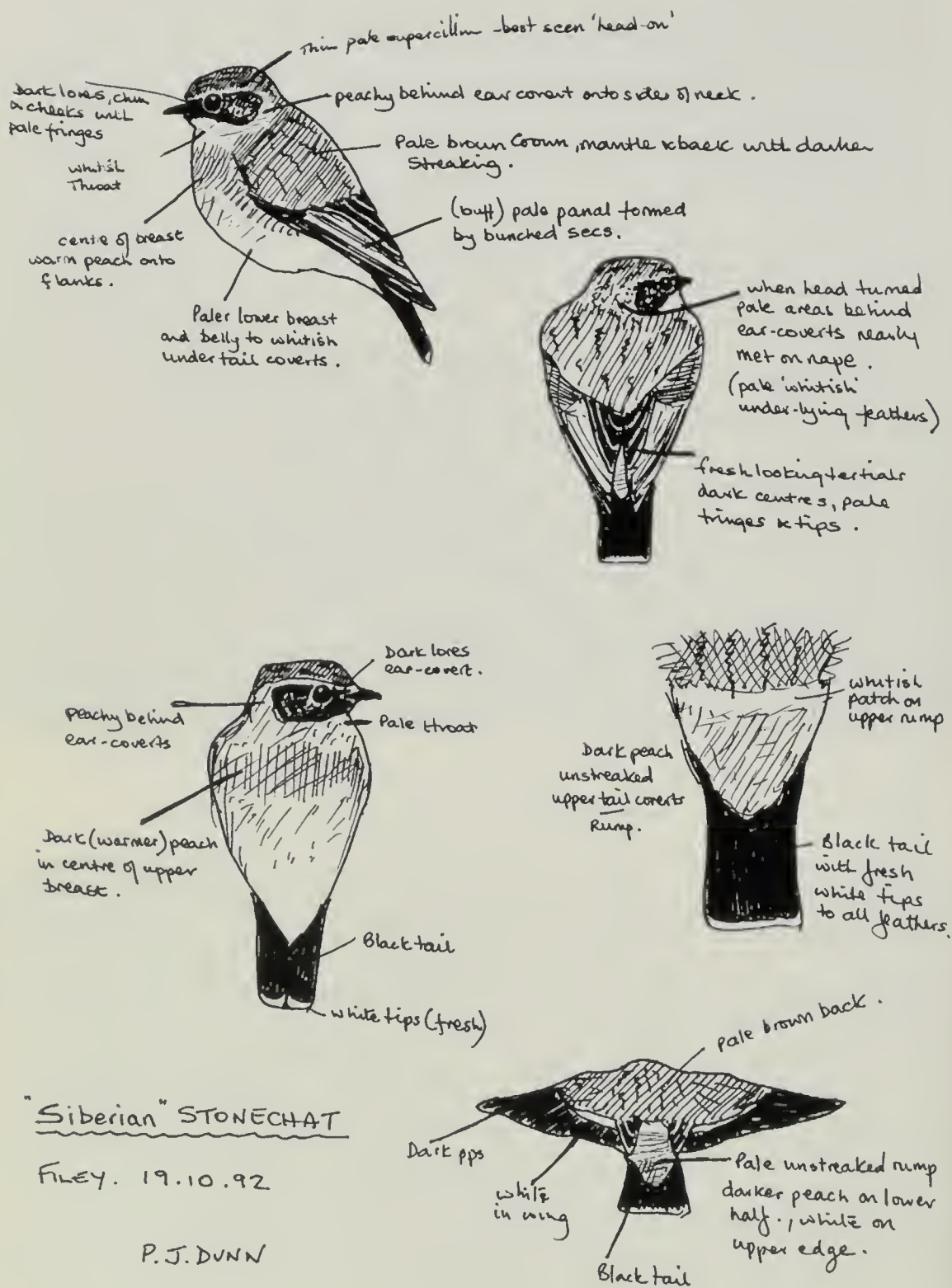


Fig. 10. Male Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* of eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*, Filey, North Yorkshire, October 1992 (P. J. Dunn)

recent years mean that there were 21 in 1990, 24 in 1991 (equalling the record year of 1987) and ten in 1992, following a lean spell of three in 1989 and four in 1988.

Several other records remain under consideration. The Committee receives a considerable number of reports of vagrant races of this species that do not state clearly whether the pale rump is streaked or unstreaked, which has added to delays in some record assessments.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 7, 1)

1991 Scilly Gugh, 15th-26th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 537), correct observers were D. A. Bridges, C. & J. R. Lansdell.

IRELAND

1992 Cork Mizen Head, 10th to 17th October (plate 178).

(South and Central Eurasia from Russia and Turkey eastwards; winters Northeast Africa and from Arabia eastwards to central India) The Co. Cork record is the most westerly ever and the first for Ireland. One British report remains under consideration by the Committee.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 24, 1)

Fife Fife Ness, ♀, 18th-21st September (Dr R. W. Byrne, A-M. Stout *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia; winters East Africa) Compared with the five records in 1991, this is a poor showing and a return to the solitary occurrences of previous years; has now occurred in every year since 1985.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 33, 4)

Buckinghamshire Chearsley, ♂, 25th April (J. E. Rose, M. S. Wallen *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 296).

Gwynedd Bardsey, ♂, in song, 6th May (P. Jenks, A. Leitch, A. & R. Normand *et al.*).

Kent Denge Marsh, ♂, 16th May (K. Alexander, T. Manship, D. Wilson *et al.*).

IRELAND

1992 Cork First-year male, Cape Clear Island, 26th to 27th May; showed characters of the western race *O. h. hispanica*.

(Southern Europe, Northwest Africa and Southwest Asia, also Iran; winters West Africa) Also a late acceptance of one in the Channel Islands, at Noirmont, Jersey, on 13th-14th May 1990.

Four in one year is good by any standards (and follows the blank year of 1991); the males in spring make for easy identification and acceptance. In addition to these, one record is still under consideration, and details of a further one in Hampshire have yet to be reported.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 31, 0)

1988 Cornwall Near Sennen Cove, ♀, 5th November (C. C. Barnard, L. P. Williams).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia, east to Mongolia; winters Sahara, Arabia and Pakistan) This takes the number of records for 1988 to three, all typically in the late autumn. Also a first-winter in the Channel Islands, at L'ree Bay, Guernsey, on 24th November 1991.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (0, 2, 0)

1985 Strathclyde Skerryvore Lighthouse, first-summer ♂, 4th-7th June, dead 8th (*Brit. Birds* 79: 585).

1987 Gwynedd Moel-y-Gest, ♂, 4th June (*Brit. Birds* 81: 594).



184. First-winter female Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, October 1992
(J. B. Higgott)



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185. First-winter Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 1992 (J. B. Higgott) (see also plate 183)

(Southern Europe, east to the Ukraine and Southwest Asia, also Northwest Africa; resident, or partial migrant to North Africa) These two records, previously published in Category D, are now admitted to the British and Irish List (*Brit. Birds* 86: 229) and enter the statistical record. The other two records, in Orkney in 1966 and East Sussex in 1977, remain in Category D.

A welcome addition to the British and Irish List.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (29, 16, 0)

1991 Highland Brora, 27th-29th September, possibly since 23rd (A. Vittery *et al.*).

(Northern and Central Siberia; winters Southern India and Southeast Asia) Of the six records since 1980, all except one (in 1984) have been within ten days of this record. Three days, possibly longer, must be considered a long time for a White's Thrush to stay around in Britain; of the 16 individuals since 1957, only three have stayed for more than one day.

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* (1, 3, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter ♀, 1st-8th October, trapped 1st, photographed (A. E. Duncan, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*) (plate 184).

(Central Siberia east to Japan; winters India, Southeast Asia, Indonesia) The fifth for Britain and Ireland and the first since an immature female on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in October 1986. All previous records have been for but a single day, so this obliging and lingering individual was admired by several boatloads of pilgrims.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 40, 0)

1991 Scilly St Agnes, 22nd-26th September; 16th-17th October. St Mary's, 17th-20th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 538). All were first-winters.

(North America and Eastern Siberia; winters Eastern USA, West Indies and Central America) Autumn 1992 was poor for transatlantic vagrants, hence the lack of records of this species or Swainson's Thrush *C. ustulatus*, the first year since 1981 that neither has appeared.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 13, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 4th October (N. C. Green, D. Rhymes, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*) (plate 182).

(Siberia and Eastern Asia to Japan; winters China and Indonesia) It seems that at least one Eyebrowed now usually accompanies the first flocks of Redwings *T. iliacus* into the British Isles. The Scilly connection of the two previous autumns seems to have come to a (temporary?) halt, but there was a gap in 1988 and 1989 when none appeared. Of the 14 records since 1958, six have been in Scilly, and all but four have been in October.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 19, 2)

Orkney Finstown, ♀, 23rd October (W. K. Barclay, K. Fairclough *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter ♀, 22nd October (P. Bristow, D. R. W. Gilmore, J. P. Hunt *et al.*).

(Central Asia; winters Northern India and China) The second record for each locality, the Scilly individual being the highlight of an extended quiet spell at a time of year which usually produces an abundance of rarities. Both, as usual, were of the black-throated race *atrogularis*. One can only speculate on how many go undetected on the East Coast or even inland.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (3, 10, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 23rd-25th September, trapped 23rd, photographed (A. E. Duncan, M. Gray, I. Jones *et al.*) (plates 183 & 185).

(Western Siberia and Central Asia to Japan; winters India and Southeast Asia) The first in Britain since three on Fair Isle, Shetland, in October 1988, but there has been one since then in Ireland, on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in October 1990. All but four of the 14 records have been in Shetland, mostly in the second half of September or the first half of October.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 43, 2)

Shetland Scatness, 17th September (G. J. Hinchon, N. & T. J. Lawrence *et al.*). Fair Isle, 27th September (J. P. Martin, M. D. & L. Sutton *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to North Japan; winters Philippines and Southeast Asia) The one at Scatness is only the fifth record in Shetland away from Fair Isle, where 41 of the 54 British records have occurred; the current unbroken run of appearances on Fair Isle now stretches back to 1984. All except four (one in May and three in November) have occurred within the period 8th September to 18th October. The comment under Pechora Pipit *Autlus gustavi*, another of Fair Isle's great specialities, applies equally well, if not more so, here.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 12, 1)

Cambridgeshire Wicken Fen, in song, 10th-11th June (G. & T. J. Bennett, G. Hewson, D. Palmer).

(Central and East Europe and West-central Asia; winters Southeast Africa) Numerically this is the rarest *Locustella* on the British List, but has probably been seen by more observers than all individuals of the previous two put together. The first since 1989. There have been recent increases in the number of records in the Netherlands and an expansion of range in Finland, Germany, Norway and Sweden (*Brit. Birds* 86: 44).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 15, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, 9th-10th June (P. V. Harvey, R. Taylor, S. C. Notier *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham, trapped, 13th, 18th October (T. Squire *et al.*).

(South Russia and Asia; winters Southwest Asia and India) The first records since 1988 and the third in June (and fourth in spring); the Sussex bird is a notable first for the South Coast. Details of one at Flamborough, Humberside, have not yet been submitted.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dunetorum* (9, 11, 0)

1991 Fife Isle of May, dead, 30th September (J. Calladine, C. Redfern *et al.*).

1991 Lincolnshire Theddlethorpe Dunes, trapped, 3rd September, released 1th, photographed (A. Ashley, A. D. Lowe, M. Thompson *et al.*).

1991 Northumberland Low Hauxley, first-winter, trapped 31st August, 1st September, photographed (M. Davison, I. Fisher, N. Foggo *et al.*) (plate 188).

(Eurasia eastwards from Finland; winters India and Sri Lanka) Three within one 31-day period, all examined in the hand. Identification and assessment made for hard work all around, especially to exclude the possibility of hybrids with Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* or Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 144, 4)**Avon** Chew Valley Lake, in song, 18th May (J. Aldridge, R. M. Curber *et al.*).**Kent** St Mary's Marshes, 21st May (A. Jones).**Shetland** Fair Isle, 9th June (Dr R. Riddington, R. Taylor, S. C. Votier *et al.*).**Suffolk** Aldeburgh, in song, 31st May (D. & J. Newton *et al.*).**1990 Lincolnshire** Waithe, in song, 19th May (K. Atkin, H. Bunn).**1991 Lancashire** Leighton Moss, in song, 4th-13th June (J. & J. Wilson *et al.*).

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa; winters Africa) A very typical spread of records, with May and June outstripping all other months for this frequently garrulous, gurgling, gravel-voiced songster.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 31, 5)**Cleveland** Hartlepool Headland, 7th-8th June (I. Boustead, T. G. Francis *et al.*).**Cumbria** South Walney, in song, trapped, 17th June, photographed (T. Dean, I. R. Kinley, C. Raven *et al.*).**Fife** Isle of May, 2nd September (J. Calladine, N. Mann, C. Wernham).**Humberside** Spurn, in song, 10th-22nd June, trapped 11th (D. P. Boyle, J. T. Harriman, B. R. Spence *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 294; 86: plate 193).**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, 14th-16th September, trapped 16th (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

(Northwest Russia, east to Mongolia and south to Iran; winters India) A record year (one ahead of the four records in each of 1981 and 1987) and the first records in spring. There was a small-scale arrival in early June, though it is conceivable that only two individuals were involved at the time; the Cumbria record is particularly unusual.

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* (0, 1, 1)**Humberside** Spurn, in song, 8th-9th June, trapped 8th (D. P. Boyle, G. Grainger, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

(Southeast Spain and the West Mediterranean islands; winters in Northwest Africa) The first was a long-staying individual on moorland in South Yorkshire from mid May to late July 1982 and was, at the time, considered likely to be a very singular event. This individual (and a third in 1993) shows that even the unexpected can occur or recur. Although found on the morning following the arrival of migrants of Scandinavian origin, it is possible that the bird had been in Britain (or elsewhere in northwest Europe) for up to two weeks before being discovered, perhaps arriving at the same time as other migrants from the Mediterranean on 24th May.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 252, 23)**Cornwall** Near Sennen, ♂, 15th May (M. P. Semmens, S. Worley). Treen, ♀ or first-summer, 27th-30th September (D. S. Flumm, J. F. Ryan *et al.*).**Devon** Lundy, ♂, 6th May (R. Bower, H. J. Radley *et al.*).**Dyfed** Skomer, ♂, 14th May (M. Everett, R. Bradbury, J. Poole); ♂, 22nd May, photographed (J. Potter, M. S. Wallen *et al.*). Skokholm, ♂, 15th May (S. Barclay, M. Betts, H. J. Radley *et al.*), possibly same as Skomer, 14th.**Gwynedd** Bardsey, first-summer ♂, trapped, 28th May (C. Brown, P. Jenks, A. Leitch *et al.*).**Merseyside** Moreton, ♀, at least 9th May (P. G. Gutteridge, M. G. & Dr J. E. Turner).**Northumberland** Newbiggin-by-Sea, ♂, 13th May (A. Priest, J. G. Steele *et al.*).**Shetland** Sumburgh, ♀, 20th May, photographed (A. & J. Clifton *et al.*) (plate 187). Fair Isle, first-summer ♂, 21st-25th May, trapped 21st, 25th (P. V. Harvey, R. M. Porter, S. C. Votier *et al.*); ♂, 27th May (T. J. Baldwin, P. V. Harvey, K. Huxley *et al.*); ♀, 27th (J. N. Dymond *et al.*);



186. Male Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*, Cunningsburgh, Shetland, August 1992 (Dennis Coutts)
187. Female Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Sumburgh, Shetland, May 1992 (Dennis Coutts)



♂, 28th (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); ♂, 2nd June (P. S. Castle, T. Sweetland, S. C. Votier *et al.*); ♂, 3rd June (R. Taylor); ♂, 12th June (S. C. Votier *et al.*). Breiwick, Eshaness, ♂, 1st June (W. Fox).

Western Isles North Lochynort, South Uist, ♂, 21st May (J. Metcalf).

Wight, Isle of Bembridge, first-summer ♂, 23rd-27th April (J. C. Gloyn, D. J. & M. Hunnybun, M. J. Sparshott *et al.*).

1991 Scilly St Agnes, ♀, 9th May (A. J. Merritt *et al.*).

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1992 Cork Male, Cape Clear Island, 20th April.

1992 Kerry Female, Bolus Head, 12th June.

1992 Wexford Female/first-year male, trapped, Great Saltee, 16th May.

(South Europe, West Turkey, Northwest Africa; winters Northern and West Africa) A good year, with over 20 records in spring and a complete contrast to the two in 1991 and 11 in 1990; the best year remains 1988, with 32 records. The abundance of records in Shetland in years of high occurrence is again reflected here.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 24, 7)

Devon Prawle Point, ♀, trapped, 7th May, photographed (N. L. Trigg *et al.*).

Greater London Surbiton, ♀, trapped, 2nd June, photographed (D. J. Montier, Mrs M. Waller).

Merseyside Formby Point, first-summer ♂, 28th-31st May, trapped 28th, photographed (J. D. Fletcher, D. Ogle *et al.*) (plate 189).

Norfolk Weybourne, ♀, trapped 14th May, released 15th (M. D. & M. J. Preston *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-summer ♀, 25th-27th May, trapped 25th, photographed (P. J. Donnelly, A. E. Duncan *et al.*). Stronsay, ♂, 29th-31st October, photographed (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, Mr & Mrs N. Kent).

Shetland Cunningsburgh, ♂, 24th July to 11th November (J. Nicolson, Mr & Mrs L. Smith, D. Suddaby) (plate 186).

(South Europe, Middle East and North Africa) The best year for Sardinian Warblers, exceeding the five in 1988 and five in 1990; the trend is clearly upward, except for the complete and inexplicable absence in 1989. Of the 25 previously accepted records, 21 were males, so the four (trapped) females this year go some way towards restoring the balance. The Greater London record, surely one of the most astonishing and unpredictable occurrences of the year, is the first inland. The long-staying individual in Shetland recalls two previous individuals (both also males) at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, one from 30th June to 15th September 1979 and the second from 6th July to 31st August 1986.

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli* (0, 3, 1)

Norfolk Holme, first-winter, 31st August to 4th September (A. Banwell, G. F. Hibberd, R. G. Millington *et al.*) (plate 104).

(Coastal regions of East Mediterranean; winters Northeast Africa) Only the fourth for Britain, and the first on the mainland – a fact much appreciated by the many who went to see it and by the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust which organised a very efficient queuing and viewing system and boosted its funds from the contributions made by the happy throngs of satisfied birders. Previous records were on Mainland, Shetland, from mid August to mid September 1977, on Lundy, Devon, in June 1979 and on Whalsay, Shetland, in October 1990.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* (0, 8, 1)**Devon** Mount Gould, Plymouth, 19th-26th October (P. Aley *et al.*) (plate 103).**1991 Humberside** Flamborough Head, first-winter, 13th October to 5th November, trapped 13th (P. A. Lassey, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*).**1991 Kent** Seasalter, 3rd-5th November, photographed (J. T. Shilling *et al.*).

(Middle East, Central Asia and Northwest Sahara) The year 1991 becomes the best for this species, with three records; this year's bird is the earliest by one day; all have been in the period 19th October to 2nd January.

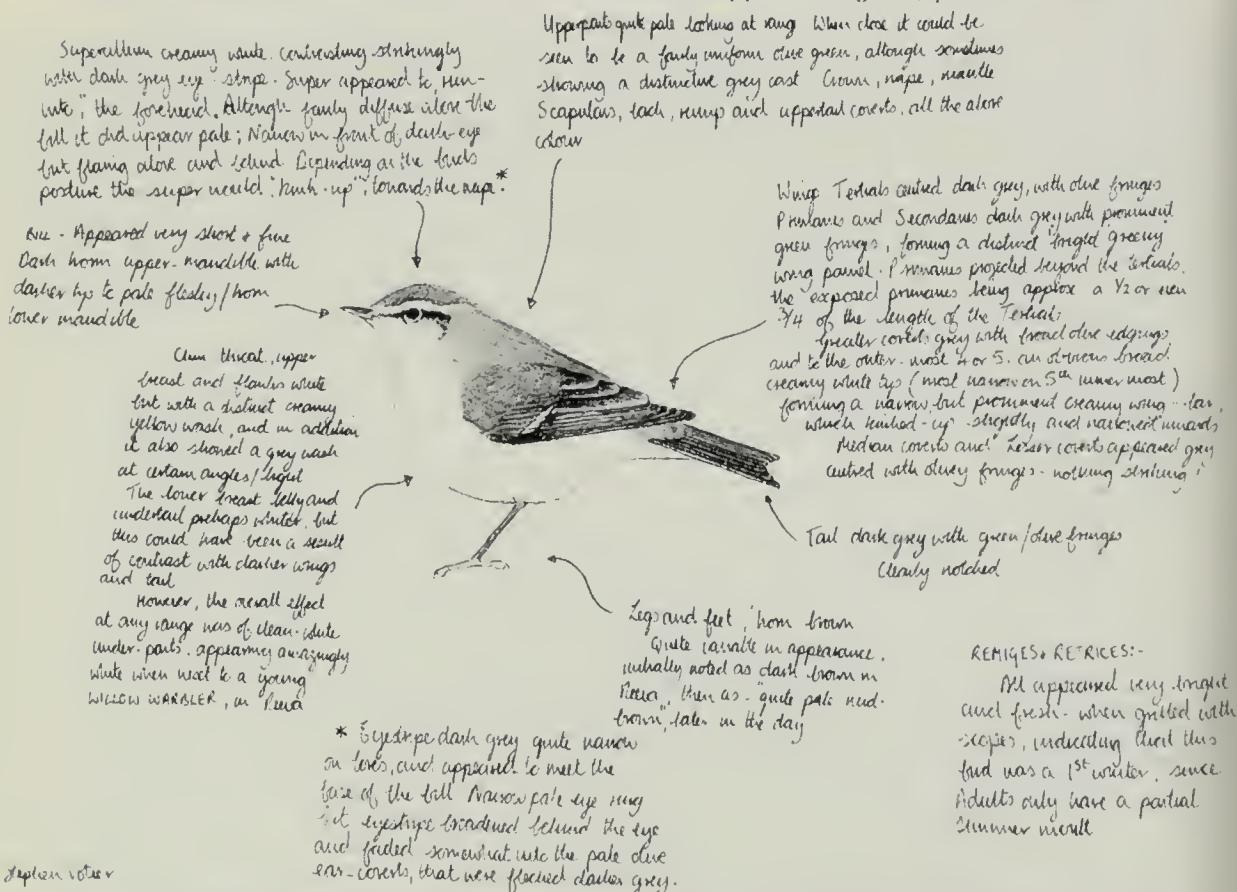
Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 201, 29)**Cumbria** Arnside, in song, 9th June (J. Gregory, R. Irving *et al.*). South Walney, trapped, 30th June, photographed (T. Dean, R. Woodland, P. Zaltowski *et al.*) (plate 190).**Devon** Wembury Point, 22nd September (P. F. Goodfellow). East Soar, 27th September (P. Saunders *et al.*).**Dorset** Portland, in song, trapped, 10th June (M. Cade, M. Rogers *et al.*).**Fife** Isle of May, 29th May (J. Conner, N. Mann *et al.*); first-winter, trapped, 28th August (J. Calladine, N. Mann).**Grampian** Rattray Head, in song, 31st May (L. T. A. Brain, T. W. Marshall, A. Webb *et al.*). Girdleness, first-winter, 23rd-24th August (S. A. Reeves, R. A. Schofield, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).**Humberside** Spurn, in song, 1st June (D. P. Boyle, B. R. Spence *et al.*).**Man, Isle of Calf of Man**, trapped, 12th June, photographed (N. V. & Mrs M. McCanch).**Norfolk** Blakeney Point, in song, 30th May (G. E. Dunmore, S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).Waxham, in song, 31st May (T. R. & Mrs J. Barker, T. Nicholson *et al.*). Blakeney Point, 5th-7th September (M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).**Orkney** Sanday, 28th May (E. R. Meek). Stronsay, 26th-28th August, photographed (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway).**Shetland** Fedar, 3rd June (A. Aitken, A. Stanbury, B. Thomason). Fair Isle, 1st June (P. S. Castle, C. J. Cox, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); another, trapped, 2nd June, presumed same, 9th

Fig. 11. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Fair Isle, Shetland, 12th August 1992 (Stephen Votier)

(P. V. Harvey, R. Taylor *et al.*); 12th August (S. C. Votier *et al.*) (fig. 11); first-winter, 24th-26th August, trapped 24th (P. V. Harvey, S. C. Votier *et al.*); first-winter, trapped, 30th (C. Bradshaw, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Whalsay, first-winter, trapped, 21st August; first-winter, trapped, 22nd (J. L. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall). Geosetter, 23rd August (H. R. Harrop); first-winter, trapped, 19th September (J. N. Dymond, G. J. Hinchon, T. J. Lawrence *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, in song, trapped, 28th May (M. C. Marsh, N. Odin, S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*). Trimley St Mary, in song, 7th June (A. G. Gough, S. Lovric *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Prior's Park, 11th September (M. P. Carruthers).

1983 Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 26th September to 4th October (*Brit. Birds* 78: 576), as Green Warbler *P. nitidus*, now regarded as conspecific (*Brit. Birds* 86: 229).

1987 Scilly Gugh, first-winter, showing the characters of *P. t. plumbeitarsus*, sometimes known as Two-barred Warbler, 22nd-27th October, photographed (C. Bradshaw, J. H. W. Ridley *et al.*).

1990 Shetland Whalsay, first-winter, 5th-7th October, trapped 5th (G. K. Gordon, Dr B. Marshall, A. S. Vials *et al.*).

1990 Yorkshire, North Filey, 25th-28th August (J. Sanderson, H. J. Whitehead *et al.*).

1991 Kent Kingsgate, in song, 8th June (F. Solly, M. P. Sutherland *et al.*).

(Eurasia, east from Northern Germany; winters Pakistan, India and Indochina) A record year, with 15 of the 29 records in spring, exceeding the previous best year, 1987, by seven records. As recently as 1987 and 1988, comments emphasised that the best time to see this species in Britain was the second half of August, for at that time there were only about a dozen June records and four in May. Analysis of spring 1992 records shows arrival periods of 28th May to 3rd June and again during 7th-12th June; autumn records conform to the late-August period, with arrivals during 21st-28th August, but there were as many during September. Whilst this spread of records undoubtedly reflects the prevailing southerly and southeasterly conditions (which included warm blasts of air from the Sahara), this species is clearly on the increase, and, with eight of the spring 1992 records being of singing males, how long will it be before the first ones breed?

The decision by the BOU Records Committee to regard the distinctive forms *P. t. nitidus* ('Green Warbler') and *P. t. plumbeitarsus* ('Two-barred Warbler') as races of Greenish Warbler will be followed by *British Birds*; the BOURC does, however, note that further research on this group is urgently required.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 151, 9)

Northumberland Farne Islands, 29th September (W. Makin).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, three: first-winter, 30th August to 1st September, trapped 30th, photographed (J. Cameron, A. E. Duncan, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*); 31st August (M. Gray *et al.*); first-winter, trapped, 21st September, photographed (G. M. Buchanan, A. E. Duncan, I. Jones *et al.*) (plate 191).

Scilly St Agnes, 20th September (P. D. Hyde *et al.*); another, 28th (S. G. Addinall, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

Shetland Sumburgh, first-winter, 5th-6th September, trapped 5th (J. Clifton, P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Lerwick, 28th-30th September (T. P. Drew *et al.*). Scalloway, 3rd-5th October (K. Hudson, K. Osborn *et al.*).

1991 Tyne & Wear Sunderland, 12th October (S. J. Ling, J. S. McDowell).

(Northern Fennoscandia east to Alaska; winters Southeast Asia) The nine 1992 records follow on from the good year in 1991; September is undoubtedly the month to see Arctic Warblers in Britain, along the East Coast from Shetland south to Norfolk and in Scilly; totals are lower in August and October, and there are also two records in July and November; spring records are unknown.



189. Above, first-summer male Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*, Formby, Merseyside, May 1992
(David Ogle)

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188. Left, first-winter Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Low Hauxley, Northumberland, August 1991 (D. C. Jardine)



00. Top, Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochitoides*,
South Walney, Cumbria, June 1992 (David
Satterthwaite)



01. Centre, first-winter Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus*
alis, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 1992
(A. Duncan)

02. Right, first-winter Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia*
nia, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1992 (Dave
Harris)



Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (3, 548, -)**1982 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 10th-13th October (P. A. Doherty *et al.*).**1985 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 22nd-26th October, trapped 22nd; another, 23rd-24th (A. S. Butler, R. C. Hart, J. McLoughlin).**1989 Humberside** Flamborough Head, three: 8th-9th October (G. P. Catley, D. G. Hobson, P. A. Lassey), probably two, 10th-11th (P. A. Lassey), three, 12th, one to 14th (P. A. Lassey, J. M. Pearson).**1990 Humberside** Grimston, 18th October (A. & T. Isherwood).**1990 Tyne & Wear** Marsden, trapped, 18th October (J. Strowger, S. Westerberg *et al.*).

(Central, East and South Asia) The 1982 record takes the total for that year to an incredible 128; it was years such as that, and the 59 in 1987 and 64 in 1988, that persuaded the Committee that this species, despite its obvious charm and appeal as the spirit of late autumn, and the great distance it had travelled to reach Western Europe, was no longer the great rarity that it once was, and so it was removed at the end of December 1990 from the list of species considered.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzii* (1, 131, 3)**Cleveland** South Gare, 3rd October, photographed (R. C. Hart *et al.*) (plate 194).**Shetland** Sumburgh, first-winter, trapped, 4th October (J. Counts, P. M. Ellis, J. D. Okill *et al.*).**Sussex, East** Icklesham, first-winter, trapped, 30th September (T. Squire *et al.*).**1988 Humberside** Flamborough Head, trapped, 16th October, photographed (T. Dolan, P. A. Lassey, J. M. Pearson *et al.*); another, 17th (P. A. Lassey).**1990 Humberside** Flamborough Head, trapped, 13th October (R. Barnes, P. A. Lassey, V. A. Lister *et al.*); 20th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 545), observers did not include D. Quinn.**1991 Bedfordshire** Priory Country Park, first-winter, trapped, 12th October (D. Kramer, E. Newman) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 100).**1991 Grampian** Girdleness, 11th October (N. Picozzi, B. J. Stewart, M. A. Sullivan *et al.*).**1991 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 10th October (J. McLoughlin *et al.*).**1991 Norfolk** Holkham Meads, 11th October (S. R. Mawby, M. Rodgers); 26th-28th October (C. & D. K. Lamsdell, M. E. S. Rooney *et al.*). Happisburgh, 12th October (P. J. Heath, B. W. Jarvis *et al.*).**1991 Suffolk** Landguard, first-winter, 8th-9th October, trapped, photographed (H. R. & Mrs M. J. Beecroft *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) The three accepted 1992 records, all in the five-day period 30th September to 4th October (about a week earlier than usual), represent the poorest total since the solitary 1986 record. For the first time since the completely blank 1983, there was none in Scilly. This is in complete contrast to 1991, when, with the addition of the acceptances given here, there was a record 22, one ahead of the previous best in 1988. In the period 8th-12th October 1991, no fewer than 18 arrived or were found in nine counties stretching from Shetland to Kent, including the second inland record (in Bedfordshire). In addition to the above, a record at Cruden Bay, Grampian, on 12th November 1989 was accepted as either this species or Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus*. One further 1992 record remains under consideration by the Committee, pending photographic evidence.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 105, 13)**Cornwall** Kenidjack, 6th-13th November (J. Chesher, J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Harlyn Bay, 14th-20th December (S. M. Christophers *et al.*).**Essex** Walton-on-the-Naze, 10th-12th October (Dr S. Cox, A. J. A. Dally, D. A. Holland *et al.*).**Humberside** Cowden, 7th October (W. F. Curtis). Spurn, first-winter, trapped, 21st October (D. P. Boyle *et al.*).

Kent St Margaret's, 12th October (J. & P. Chantler, I. P. Hodgson).

Shetland Scalloway, 1st October (K. Osborn). Noness, 1st-2nd October (P. M. Ellis, J. McKee *et al.*). Whalsay, first-winter, 2nd-3rd October, trapped 2nd; first-winter, trapped, 4th (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*). Dale of Walls, 4th October (Dr C. F. Maekenzie).

Suffolk Westleton, 20th November (H. E. Axell).

Sussex, East Combe Haven, Bexhill-on-Sea, 26th October (M. P. Sutherland).

1988 Humberside Flamborough Head, trapped, 25th October, photographed (P. A. Lassey, M. Newsome, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*).

1990 Humberside Flamborough Head, 21st October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 545), first observed 20th (D. Quinn). Blacktoft Sands, 10th-11th November (A. Grieve, A. & S. Norris, P. A. Ward *et al.*).

1991 Dorset Hengistbury Head, 29th October (D. N. Smith).

1991 Humberside Flamborough Head, 13th-15th October, trapped 15th, photographed (J. C. Lamplough, P. A. Lassey, M. Newsome *et al.*); 26th October to 2nd November, trapped 26th, photographed (P. A. Lassey, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*).

1991 Lothian Seoughall, 30th October (D. J. Bates).

1991 Norfolk Blakeney Point, 10th October (D. M. Jones, B. J. Robson). Sheringham, 27th-31st October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 545), trapped 27th, 29th, photographed (D. H. Sadler).

1991 Suffolk Dunwich, trapped, 27th October, photographed (H. E. Axell, Sir A. G. Hurrell, D. J. Pearson).

(Central and Northeast to Southern Asia; winters Northern India and Southeast Asia) The fortunes and annual tides of Radde's *P. schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers reaching Britain continue to conflict and confuse. There were 13 Dusky and three Radde's in 1992, of which only the five Dusky Warblers in Shetland arrived within the same five-day period as the Radde's. In 1991, for which, with the addition of these late acceptances, the total for Dusky now moves to ten, only one (in Norfolk) occurred with the main arrival of Radde's during 8th-12th October (though a second in Humberside occurred a day later). Conversely, the main period for Dusky Warbler in 1991 was around 26th-27th October, when seven arrived. The best years for Dusky have been 1987 and 1990, with 19 and 20 records respectively, whilst the peak years for Radde's have been 1988 and 1991, with totals of 22 and 21 respectively. The one at Harlyn Bay, Cornwall, is the latest by almost a month and the first December record in Britain (one in Ireland which was found dying in Co. Limerick on 5th December 1970 had been ringed the previous May on the Calf of Man).

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 113, 6)

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, adult, 18th-19th September, trapped 18th, 19th, photographed, found dead 19th, skin retained by observers (N. V. & Mrs M. McCanch).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 27th September (P. J. Donnelly, F. Maroevie) (fig. 12, on page 523).

Shetland Fair Isle, 30th September (A. A. & J. Clifton *et al.*). Exnaboe, adult, 11th-15th October, possibly since 4th, trapped 14th (J. Gregory, K. Osborn, J. Polson *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Prior's Park, 6th October (J. Bishop, Dr C. Bradshaw, M. P. Carruthers *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 19th September, presumed same, 27th-28th, photographed (J. M. Turton *et al.*) (plate 111).

1972 Cleveland Wilton, then North Yorkshire, 20th August (*Brit. Birds* 66: 349), now considered inadequately documented.

1972 Yorkshire, North See above.

1989 Yorkshire, North Filey, 13th September (J. E. Rogan, J. M. Turton).

1990 Cornwall The Lizard, 13th September (B. Cave, A. R. Pay).

1991 Dyfed Skokholm, 31st August (M. Betts).

1991 Kent Minnis Bay, 27th October to 9th November (N. A. Hando, C. A. Osborne, D. W. Taylor *et al.*).



193. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Spurn, Humberside, June 1992 (R. C. Wilson)



194. Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, South Gare, Cleveland, October 1992 (R. C. Hart)

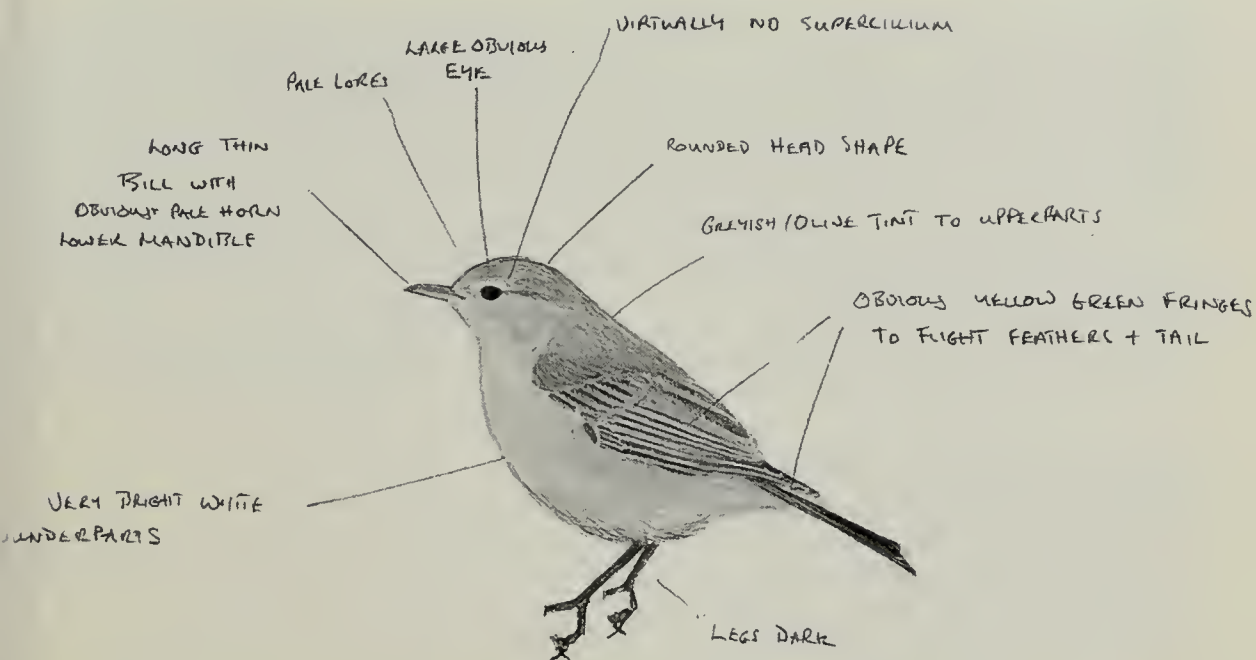


Fig. 12. Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 1992 (P. J. Donnelly)

(Central, West and South Europe, Levant and Northwest Africa; winters northern Africa) The best year since 1984, but 1976, with 11 records, remains well ahead of all other years. A good autumn, with all records in the period mid September to mid October, but there has been none in spring since two in Norfolk in April and May 1988. A late record of one in Norfolk in November remains to be assessed by the Committee.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 14, 1)

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, ♂, 24th May (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan).

(Central and Southeast Europe and West Russia; winters Africa) The first since 1986. Of the total of 17 records for Britain, 13 have been in May, two in June and singles in September and October; all except this bird and three individuals in Caernarvon (1957), Cumbria (1964) and Scilly (1984) have been on the East Coast. Further reports from Dungeness, Kent, and Suffolk in early May are still being assessed by the Committee.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 16, 0)

1979 Dorset Portland, trapped, 7th May (A. J. Bundy, D. E. Paull, M. Rogers *et al.*).

1983 Kent St Margaret's, trapped, 24th September (J. R. H. Clements, A. J. Greenland).

1984 Kent Dungeness, trapped, 15th, 19th April (S. D. McMinn *et al.*).

1988 Kent Sandwich Bay, 19th-25th October, trapped 19th (K. B. Ellis, W. E. Fletcher, N. V. McCanch *et al.*).

1990 Kent Sandwich Bay, trapped, 7th November, photographed (C. Solly, S. Stansfield, J. H. van der Dol).

(Central and South Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa) These belated acceptances take the British total to 16, of which 13 have been in Kent.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 59, 2)

Gwynedd Llyn Rhos Dhu, Anglesey, 21st October (N. E. Gammon, C. Kightley, Mrs P. Walton *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Knaresborough, ♂, alloy ring, right leg, 19th-20th September (R. & Mrs S. Evison, J. R. Mather *et al.*) (plate 195).

1988 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, ♂, ♀, 11th-12th November (A. Grieve, I. Robinson *et al.*).

1989 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, 17th, 30th March (A. Grieve, C. Gutheridge), possibly since 1988.

1991 Kent Dungeness, 30th-31st December (B. Banson, J. & R. Beale, D. Walker *et al.*).

(Western Europe to Manchuria; mainly resident, occasionally dispersive or eruptive) After the promising increase in records in the late 1980s and 1990-91, with peaks of 12 in 1989 and ten in 1991, this is, by comparison, a poor showing; the incipient colonist seems to have had a (temporary?) change of heart. Details of one in Cleveland in July have not yet been reported.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 35, 0)

1991 Kent North Foreland, first-winter, 28th October (K. Lord, M. P. Sutherland).

1991 Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 28th October to 2nd November (M. Gray *et al.*).

(South Asia to China; winters Northeast Africa) The year 1992 was the first since 1986 for which the record sheet remains blank for this species, a sad state of affairs compared with the heady days of 1988, with seven records, or even the four in 1991 (three of which arrived in the period 26th-28th October).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 108, 1)

Devon Otterton, 9th July (Mrs E. J. Brookes, D. & Mrs J. Cullen, P. W. Ellicott *et al.*).

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1991 Waterford Dungarvan, 20th to 24th September.

(South and East Europe and Southwest Asia; winters East and South Africa) A less-than-average showing.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* (1, 3, 2)

Individuals showing the characters of the eastern race *L. e. pallidirostris* were recorded as follows:

Cornwall Cape Cornwall and Kenidjack Carn, 21st-23rd April, photographed (A. R. Birch, R. Hathway, J. F. Ryan *et al.*) (fig. 9, on page 503; plates 196 & 197 on page 527).

Suffolk Easton Bavents and Southwold, age uncertain, 4th-7th October, photographed (W. J. Brame, J. M. Cawston, E. W. Patrick *et al.*).

1989 Dorset Portland, first-winter, 1st November (G. Walbridge, J. Williamson *et al.*).

(Southern and Eastern Siberia) The first since 1986 and the total for the British Isles now moves to six. The Cornish individual is the first in spring; September-November are the other months of occurrence.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (101, 485, -)

1990 Devon Prawle Point, 21st March (D. E. Balmer, P. St Pierre *et al.*).

(West, Central and South Europe, Southwest Asia and North Africa; winters North and West Africa) This record takes the 1990 total to 23; it is also the fourth March record in Devon for that year and the seventh ever (all of which were in 1990). This species was dropped from the list of species considered by the Committee at the end of 1990.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 215, 5)

Cornwall Sennen, juvenile, 20th September (S. Hey).

Devon Lundy, adult, 11th-13th August, photographed (J. Alford, A. M. Jewels *et al.*).

Essex Bradfield, adult, 9th-11th June (R. & K. Dowsett *et al.*).

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig and Sker area, juvenile, 20th September to 4th October (O. J. Leyshon, L. & Mrs E. Murley *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, adult, 4th-10th July, photographed (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway *et al.*).

1987 Yorkshire, West Wakefield, adult, 23rd June, photographed (Miss S. Pettitt per S. P. Singleton).

1991 Cornwall Penzance, juvenile, 7th-10th October (M. V. Sneary *et al.*).

1991 Cumbria South Walney, juvenile, 6th-8th September (T. Dean, C. Raven, J. Robinson-Dean).

1991 Devon Hope Cove, juvenile, 3rd-4th September (*Brit. Birds* 85: 548), 7th (J. Martin).

1991 Highland Thurso, juvenile, 13th November (J. Smith *et al.*).

1989 At sea Sea area Humber, 53° 02' N 02° 15' E, 48 km northeast of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, adult, 7th June, photographed (C. W. Smith).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) Three summer adults and two autumn juveniles: a below-average showing. At least five other records have yet to be submitted to the Committee, however, and several others remain under consideration. The first year since 1976 that none has appeared in Scilly. The late acceptances for 1991 take the total for that year to 13, exceeded only by the 17 in 1983.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 73, 1)

Strathclyde Arinagour, Coll, 3rd October (I. D. Bullock).

1988 Highland Thurso, 8th November (P. M. Miller).

1990 Humberside Kilnsea, 30th September to 1st October, trapped 30th, photographed (A. Dixon, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

1991 Cleveland North Gare, 12th October (B. J. K. Caswell, M. N. Sidwell *et al.*).

1991 Cornwall The Lizard, 30th September to 10th October (B. Cave *et al.*).

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1991 Wexford The bird referred to in *Brit. Birds* 85: 548-549 was present from 12th to 14th October.

(North America; winters Cuba and northern South America) A poor year by recent standards—six in 1991, ten in 1990 and 12 in 1988—no doubt reflecting the adverse conditions for a successful transatlantic crossing at the end of September and beginning of October. The bird in Highland in November 1988 is the latest ever (by about ten days) and it is tempting to speculate on its exact arrival date; otherwise, all records have been in the period 21st September to 29th October.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 239, 9)

Norfolk Gunton Park, 17th-19th February (A. P. Benson) (fig. 13). East Harling, 28th January to 6th February (Mrs J. Dean *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 16th February (D. Patterson, K. N. Scott, K. A. Wilson). Stromness, Mainland, 25th-28th April (E. R. Meek, Mr & Mrs S. Mowat). Shapinsay, 24th-27th October (P. & Mrs L. Hollindrake).

Shetland Fetlar, 19th February (B. & C. Thomason). Fair Isle, 29th April (P. V. Harvey); 18th October (P. V. Harvey, C. J. Orsman, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Cunningsburgh, 18th-20th October (C. Donald, H. R. Harrop, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

1982 Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 21st February to at least 13th April, trapped, not ringed, 21st March, photographed (G. P. Catley, M. Mellor *et al.*).

1989 Suffolk Martlesham, 11th-28th January, photographed (J. A. Davis, M. C. Marsh *et al.*).

1990 Humberside Grimsby, 8th-9th December (A. & T. Isherwood).

1990 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, first-winter, 19th-20th October, trapped 20th (P. J. Dunn, R. E. Harbird, H. J. Whitehead *et al.*).

1991 Bedfordshire New Wavendon Heath, 21st-28th March, another, 23rd-24th (*Brit. Birds* 85:

549); observers of first should include M. J. Palmer; second present 24th only; correct locality Aspley Heath.

1991 Kent Sevenoaks, 2nd March (*Brit. Birds* 85: 549), was not considered acceptable.

1991 Lincolnshire Linwood Warren, two, 21st-27th January (K. D. Durose, S. P. Botham).

1991 Norfolk Sandringham, 17th January (M. E. S. Rooney). Mousehold Heath, twenty, 10th-16th March (*Brit. Birds* 85: 549), 17th (R. M. Patient).

1991 Suffolk Blaxhall Heath, 29th March (B. J. Small).

1991 Surrey Godstone 10th-11th March (R. J. & S. J. Aspinall, R. P. Bosanquet *et al.*).

1991 Tyne & Wear Dunston-upon-Tyne, 13th February (K. Bowey).

(Circumpolar Arctic; spreads erratically south in winter) Four of the records were of birds seen on one day only, and five occurred during April and October, all indicating passage movement. Details of at least one other have not yet been reported to the Committee.

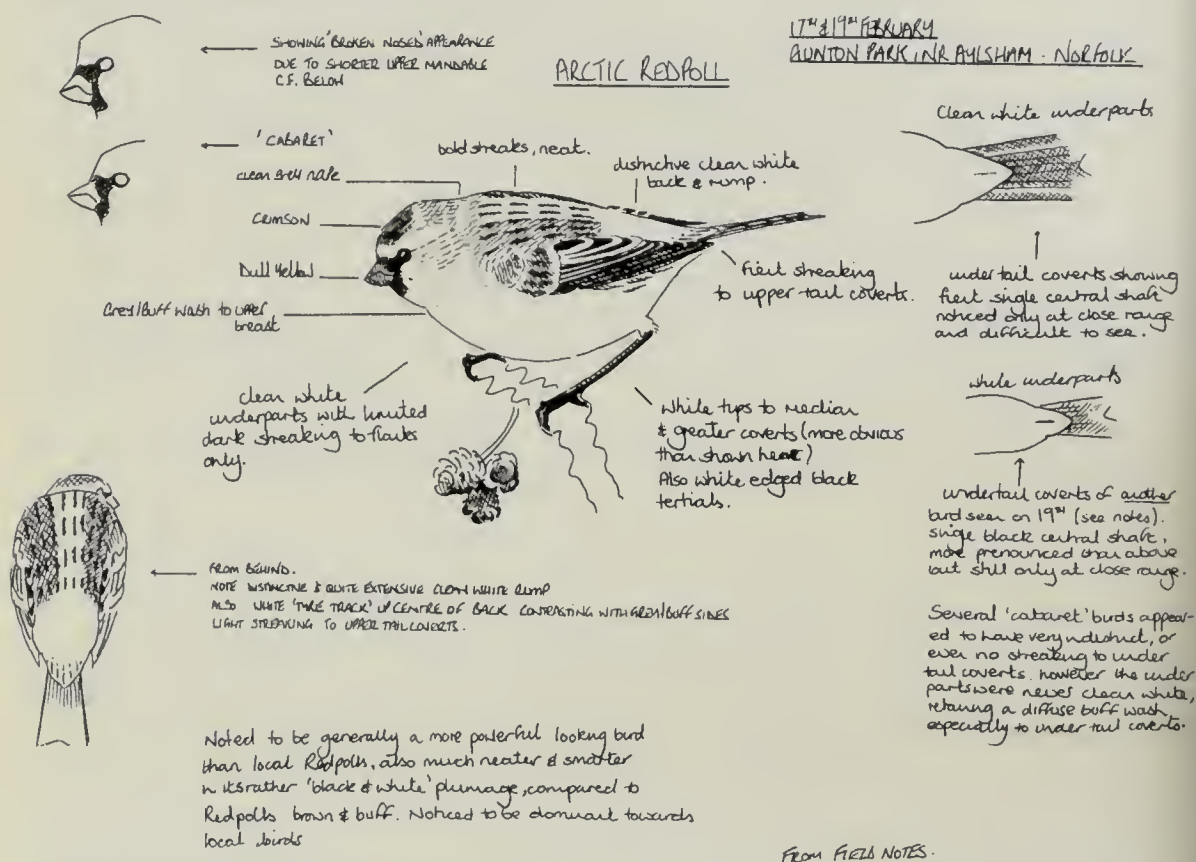


Fig. 13. Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*, Gunton Park, Norfolk, 17th-19th February 1992 (A. P. Benson)

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 75, 0)

1987 Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 28th August (A. D. Warren and YOC group).

1990 Derbyshire Upper Derwentdale, ♂, 11th November (K. R. Gould).

1990 Kent Bedgebury, juvenile or first-winter ♀, 7th October to 11th November (*Brit. Birds* 84: 499), another, at least 13th October, photographed (K. A. & Mrs M. A. Hook *et al.*).

1990 Norfolk Sandringham Warren, ♂, 29th September (J. R. Williamson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 84: plate 92).

1990 Yorkshire, North Dalby Forest, ♂, 3rd December (W. F. Curtis).

(Northeast Europe, North-central Asia, northern North America and Hispaniola; winters south and west of breeding range) The late acceptances for 1990 take the total of records in this most recent invasion year to 22, second only to the numbers (mostly juveniles) involved in the localised invasion of the Northern Isles in August 1987.

188 Right, male Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*,
Kissborough, North Yorkshire, September 1992
(Jack Levene)



197. Below, Great Grey Shrike *Lanius ex-*
of eastern race *pallidirostris*, Cape Cornwall,
Cornwall, April 1992 (Ren Hathway)



Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 478, 0)

1990 Durham Hamsterley Forest, up to ten, 7th November to 10th March 1991 (A. L. Armstrong, B. Unwin *et al.*).

1990 Norfolk Sprowston, ♂, 29th November to 1st December, two ♀♀, 29th November, 2nd December, ♀, 1st, ♂ photographed (C. & J. R. Lansdell).

1990 Northamptonshire Wakerley Great Wood, ♂, 25th November to at least 9th January 1991 (S. P. Botham *et al.*); ♀, 22nd November to at least 16th March 1991 (R. F. Burrows, P. Campbell *et al.*).

1990 Nottinghamshire The Dukeries, three ♂♂, two first-winter ♂♂, two ♀♀, 14th December to 16th February 1991 (D. Hursthouse *et al.*).

1990 Tyne & Wear Chopwell Woods, at least 27, 17th November to at least 26th December, ♂♂, trapped: 20th November; three, 21st; two, 5th December; ♀♀, trapped: 20th, 21st November (K. Bowey, S. Westerberg *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 84: plate 90).

1991 Cleveland Birk Brow, up to 47, 1st-18th March, at least 22 photographed (M. A. Blick, D. J. Britton, J. Youngs *et al.*), probably included six, Lockwood Beck Reservoir, since 11th November 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 500).

1991 Durham See 1990 above.

1991 Northamptonshire Wakerley Great Wood, ♂, 2nd March (A. H. J. Harrop), probably since 1990 above.

1991 Nottinghamshire See 1990 above.

1991 Yorkshire, North Oakdale, Osmotherly, seven, including ♂, 31st March (P. Kerr), presumed four of same, including three ♂♂, ♀, 13th April (M. J. Hobbs, J. C. Lowen, A. J. Musgrove *et al.*).

(Scandinavia and West Russia; periodically spreads south and west in winter) None in 1992; these acceptances take the totals for the invasion to 267; the March and April records given here are the final records of a large-scale irruption that began with the arrivals in Shetland in the last week of September 1990. Several more records relating to that period remain under consideration.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (0, 6, 1)

Highland Balnakeil, near Durness, ♂, 4th June, photographed (Dr M. H. Blatner *et al.*) (plates 198 & 199).

(Southeast Spain, Canary Islands, Northern Africa and Southwest Asia) The first since 1987 and the seventh ever; five have now occurred at the end of May or beginning of June. This record, so far north for an overshooting migrant in late spring, recalls similar records in Sutherland (June 1971) and Orkney (1981).

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* (8, 2, 1)

Shetland Lerwick, ♂, probably first-year, in song, 25th March to at least 25th April (P. Barry *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plates 201, 205).

(Scandinavia across Asia and North America) The first since May 1975 and only the tenth record (eleventh individual) for Britain and Ireland, of which only six have been this century. During the early part of this bird's stay, the interest in its occurrence was such that it made the national news, becoming doubly newsworthy when it was reported (apparently without foundation) that the bird was having difficulty finding food, through lack of its favoured pines on Shetland, and birdwatchers were becoming concerned for its welfare. Pine Grosbeaks periodically undertake fairly large-scale invasions into southern Scandinavia from farther east. The last sizeable invasion involving thousands was in 1976-77, but a smaller-scale arrival took place in 1989-90, and in such



1198 & 199. Male Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*, Balnakeil, Highland, June 1992 (Al. H. Blattner)



Below, female or immature Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Inner Farne, Northumberland, September 1992 (Jack Levene)



years there has been widespread, but unfulfilled, expectation (and predictions) of birds arriving on the east coast of Britain. The one in 1992 arrived in a year when there were no reported invasions into southern Scandinavia.

Northern Parula *Parula americana* (0, 14, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 8th-10th October (D. Helliar, B. J. Mathews, B. J. Widden *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central America) The first since one on Dursey Island, Co. Cork, in September 1989 and two in England (Cornwall and Dorset) in 1988. Of the total of 15 records (the first was in 1966), five have been in Scilly, four in Cornwall and three in Dorset. Usually a confiding species, this individual was, at times, very difficult to see as it foraged in thickly ivy-clad trees.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* (0, 2, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter ♂, trapped, 24th August (A. E. Duncan, A. Mitchell, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

1990 Shetland Helendale, Lerwick, ♂, 3rd-4th November (*Brit. Birds* 84: 500, plate 97), age/sex uncertain.

(North and Central America; winters south to Peru) In the hand, this individual was provisionally identified as a first-winter male of the eastern race *aestiva*. It is the earliest of the three British records (and is also the earliest autumn date for a transatlantic crossing by an American passerine) by two days, and recalls the first on Bardsey, Gwynedd, in August 1964. The dates reflect the early departure of Yellow Warblers from the breeding areas in the forests of northern Canada and Alaska, none of which makes it any easier to understand the second record in Britain, in Shetland in the first week of November 1990.

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* (0, 1, 1)

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 10th September (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan).

(North America; winters south to Panama) The second British record of this, the most unlikely of the American warblers to have reached this side of the Atlantic; the first was on St Agnes, Scilly, in September 1970.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (0, 2, 0)

1981 Suffolk Landguard Point, 30th June to 8th July (*Brit. Birds* 75: 531; 86: plate 201).

1991 Norfolk Waxham, 15th-17th May (B. W. Jarvis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 84: plates 306 & 307).

(North America; winters south to El Salvador) The 1981 record, previously published in Category D, is now admitted to the British and Irish List (*Brit. Birds* 86: 229) and enters the statistical record. For all that their journey from the New World has to be assumed to be natural, the geographical coincidence suggests that both had hitched a lift somewhere along the way to the North Sea. Nonetheless, the timing of both occurrences conforms to that of numerous other North American seed-eaters over the years. Will the next be in the year 2001?

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 16, 2)

Lincolnshire Willingham, 5th December to 28th March 1993, trapped 5th December, photographed (N. Bray, S. A. Britton, G. P. Catley *et al.*) (plates 202 & 203).

Suffolk Trimley St Mary, 31st May to 8th June (W. J. Brame, E. W. Patrick *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 295; 86: plate 204).

(North America) Much of what is said in the comment under the previous species may be applied to the Suffolk record, since it was remarkably close to Felixstowe docks. The first since 1989 and the eighteenth and nineteenth for Britain and Ireland. The dates of the Suffolk bird coincide with those of the ten previous spring records, and the one in Lincolnshire (which lived in a small clump of hawthorns in a clearing in the middle of a huge Forestry Commission plantation and survived some extremely cold midwinter nights) is the third to overwinter here.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 14, 1)

Strathclyde Hamilton, ♂, 3rd-4th May, photographed (I. & Mrs J. Sheddon *et al.*).

(North America) The sharp eyes of the observers feeding the sparrows in their back garden detected this bird, the sixteenth for Britain and Ireland and the fifth in Scotland. May is the peak month for records of this species, and gardens are the habitat in which they occur most frequently.

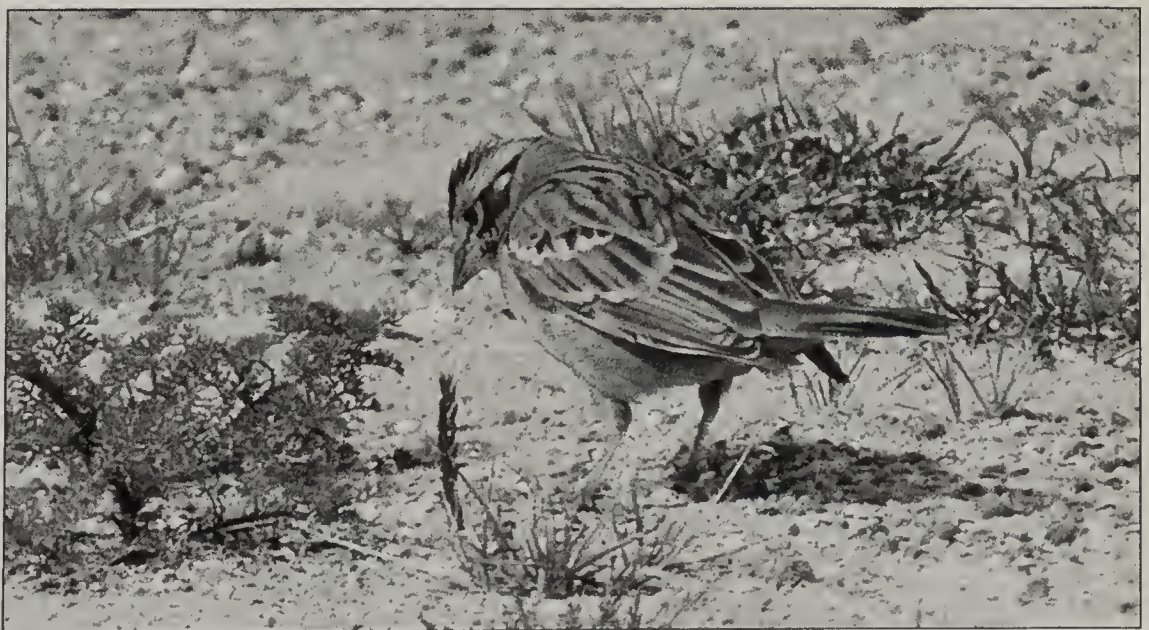
Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 17, 2)

Greater London Dagenham Chase, ♂, 12th February to 17th March (K. Barrett, L. Harrison *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 85: plates 204, 207).

Northumberland Cresswell, ♂, 29th January to 19th February, photographed (I. Fisher *et al.*) (plate 127).

(Urals, across Asia to Sakhalin; winters Middle East, India, China) These two prolonged stayers provided ample opportunities for observers to get fully acquainted with the species; the Northumberland individual proved somewhat elusive on occasion, but the Dagenham one never failed to put on a good show, much to the delight of over 2,000 birders and other admirers. The total now stands at 21 for Britain (there are no records for Ireland), and 11 of these have been in the Northern Isles. The record of a female at Big Waters Nature Reserve, Tyne & Wear, in 1990 remains under review (*Brit. Birds* 86: 378-386).

201. Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*, Landguard Point, Suffolk, July 1981 (Jeff Pick)





202 & 203. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Willingham, Lincolnshire, December 1992 (G. P. Catley)



204. Below, White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Trimley St Mary, Suffolk, June 1992 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)





2205. First-winter male Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Landguard, Suffolk, October 1992 (Jack Levene)

206. Female Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, near Nanjizal, Cornwall, October 1992 (Nigel Bean)



Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* (0, 2, 1)**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 22nd-23rd September (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 86: 411-414).

(Northeast Asia and East China; winters Southeast China) The third for Britain, and the earliest by about two weeks; the previous records were in Norfolk (1975) and Shetland (1980). This record immediately preceded a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* and was a week ahead of the female Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* in what was an outstanding autumn for North Ronaldsay.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 214, 14)**Cornwall** Near Nanjizal, ♀, 7th-8th October, photographed (N. Hando, G. C. Stephenson *et al.*) (plate 206).**Humberside** Spurn, 27th-29th September (P. Bowman, D. P. Boyle *et al.*).**Lincolnshire** Saltfleetby, 22nd March, photographed (A. H. J. Harrop, A. C. Sims *et al.*).**Northumberland** Holy Island, ♂, 31st May, photographed (M. J. Sharp *et al.*). Farne Islands, ♂, 3rd October (W. Makin *et al.*).**Orkney** Stronsay, 3rd October (J. Andrews, J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway). North Ronaldsay, 29th October to 2nd November (P. J. Donnelly, A. Mitchell *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♀, 25th May (P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Grutness, ♂, 2nd June, same, Sumburgh, 3rd (A. & J. Clifton, J. & Mrs I. Miller *et al.*). Sumburgh and Scatness, 27th-29th September (A. V. Moon, J. Warne, S. A. Webb *et al.*).Sumburgh, 4th October (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, trapped, 4th October (C. Donald, K. Osborn, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).**Suffolk** Landguard, first-winter ♂, trapped, 3rd October, photographed (R. Duncan, N. Odin *et al.*) (plate 205).**Western Isles** Hirta, St Kilda, ♂, 27th May (J. Vaughan).**1990 Shetland** Sumburgh and Grutness, ♀, 28th-30th May (*Brit. Birds* 84: 501), finders included S. Baldwin, N. A. Driver, D. Taylor.**1991 Cornwall** Sennen, 14th October (Dr A. M. Hanby, B. Short, J. Young *et al.*).**1991 Highland** Baligill, Sutherland, in song, 16th-18th May, photographed (E. W. E. Maughan, J. Smith, J. Walker).**1991 Shetland** Noss, ♀, 27th May (R. Armstrong).**1991 Tyne & Wear** Sunderland, 12th to at least 17th October (T. I. Mills *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia; winters Turkestan to China and Japan) A good year, and follows a slowly rising trend with previous peaks of 17 in 1990 and 19 in 1987. The Lincolnshire record is the earliest ever in Britain and predates two others in that month; apart from this record, the four others in spring arrived in the period 25th May to 2nd June, and eight of the nine autumn records were in the period 27th September to 8th October.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (93, 463, 13)**Borders** St Abb's Head, 3rd October (A. Kerr, D. Patterson).**Cornwall** St Columb Major, adult, 18th January to 2nd February, trapped 2nd, photographed (R. Burridge, S. M. Christophers, M. George).**Grampian** Balmedie, 1st October (H. Gregory, Dr I. M. Phillips).**Northumberland** Cocklawburn Dunes, 29th September (G. W. Dodds).**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 28th September to 6th October (A. Banwell, K. M. Wilson *et al.*); 2nd-3rd October (P. J. & Mrs M. J. Donnelly, Mrs A. Tulloch); 1th-9th October, trapped 4th (A. E. Duncan, L. Wells *et al.*).**Scilly** Tresco, 22nd-23rd October (D. Rhymes *et al.*).**Shetland** Whalsay, at least two: 21st-24th September (M. I. Eldridge, J. L. Irvine, A. M. Stoddart), probably same, 29th-30th (M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart); 25th September (M. I. Eldridge, Dr B. Marshall, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Out Skerries, trapped, 3rd October (E. Tait). Fetlar, 3rd-10th October (A. Aitken, B. Thomason). Fair Isle, 15th October (Dr R. Riddington, J. M. Turton *et al.*).**Surrey** Frensham Little Pond, in song, 11th-17th April (S. P. Peters *et al.*).**1989 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 18th September (P. A. Lassey).

1990 Dorset Verne Common, 25th April (C. E. Richards).

1990 Scilly St Mary's, 13th-18th October (*Brit. Birds* 84: 502), 12th (S. Berry, J. Howarth *et al.*).

1991 Devon South Milton Ley, first-year, trapped 23rd November, released 24th (R. Burridge, M. George *et al.*).

1991 Northumberland Newbiggin, two, 10th October (C. Annan, A. Priest); another, 10th (T. J. Tams).

1991 Yorkshire, North Filey, 12th-13th October (S. Cochrane, D. J. & P. M. Scanlan, H. J. Whitehead).

(Northeast Europe and North Asia; winters Turkestan to India and Southeast Asia) A fairly typical showing, though 13 is slightly below the average of the last few years. The late 1989 record published here takes that year's total, the highest ever, to 50. The recent pattern of wintering in secluded spots, and occasional records in spring, is again shown in the 1992 records. Is this a very scarce wintering bird in Britain and northwest Europe or are these just records of late migrants which have run out of impetus and the urge to go anywhere else? This species will be dropped from the list considered by the Committee at the end of December 1993.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 146, 4)

Norfolk Holme, ♀ or immature, 19th-20th September (A. Banwell, W. Boyd, G. F. Hilberd *et al.*) (plate 105).

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀ or immature, 18th-20th September (P. Allen, P. Bush *et al.*) (plate 200).

Orkney Stronsay, ♀ or immature, 21st September (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, M. Sutton *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀ or immature, 17th-20th September (R. G. Bayldon, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

1991 Tyne & Wear Ryhope, ♀ or immature, 22nd September (S. J. Ling) (fig. 14).

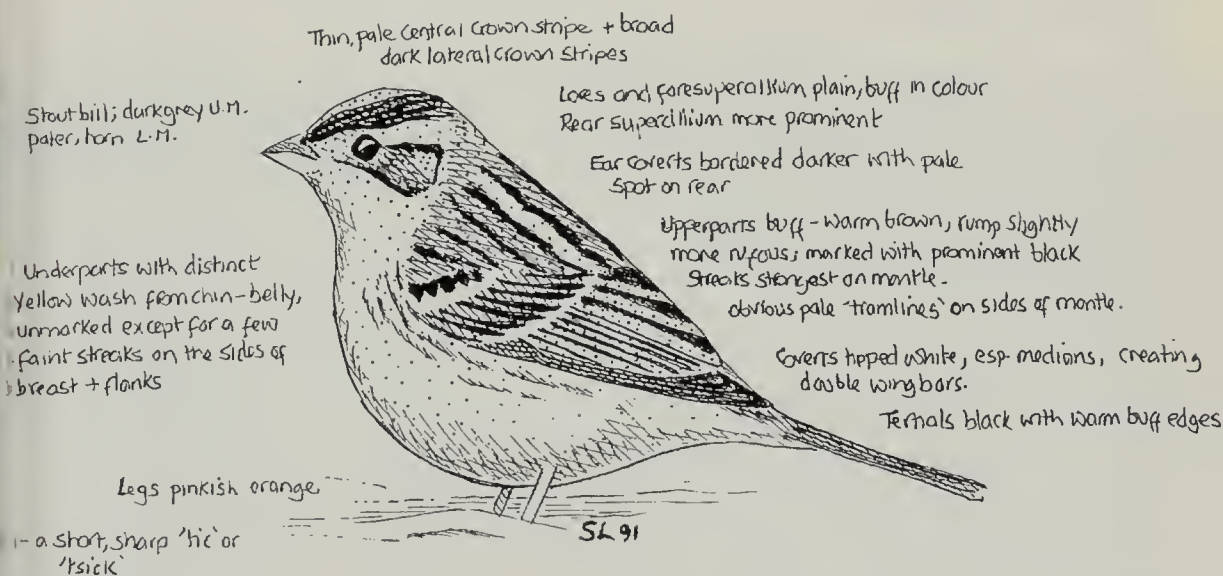


Fig. 14. Female or immature Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Ryhope, Tyne & Wear, September 1991 (S. J. Ling)

(Northeast Europe across North Asia; winters India and Southeast Asia) Four records are about an average showing, but those away from the Northern Isles provided one of the surprises of the year. The vast majority are always in September. One further September 1992 report, from Shetland, remains under consideration.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 83, 12)**Cornwall** Gwithian, ♂, 20th May (P. A. Rutter).**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, ♂, 15th-27th July, trapped 17th, photographed (Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*).**Scilly** St Martin's, ♂, 18th-23rd May (P. Larkin, D. Osborn).**Shetland** Fair Isle, five: ♀, 9th June (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); ♂, ♀, 10th (P. V. Harvey, R. Taylor); another ♂, 10th (J. Coutts, R. Taylor, S. C. Votier); ♂, 14th (J. & P. Shilton). Aithsetter, ♀, 30th September to 4th October, trapped 3rd (P. M. Ellis, A. McCall *et al.*).**Somerset** Shapwick Heath, ♂, 21st April (P. W. Luxton).**Suffolk** Trimley St Mary, ♂, 4th June (A. Banwell *et al.*).**Western Isles** Drimsdale, South Uist, ♂, 13th-21st August (T. J. Dix, G. Flogdell, A. M. Macaskill).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) A typical spread of records conforming to the pattern of late-May to June arrival, plus one late-summer and two autumn records; the timing of the late-spring arrival pattern compares well with that of other migrants from Southeast Europe and must surely be a strong indication of their origin. The exception to the rule, the April record in Somerset, is only the third for that month, the two previous being in 1979 in Norfolk and in Scilly. Details of at least four others have not yet been reported to the Committee. The previous best year was 1988, with eight.

An indeterminate bird on Blakeney Point, Norfolk, on 10th-11th September 1989 posed considerable identification problems for those who saw it, and for the Committee; a 'warm apricot' wash to the rump and a deep 'chup' call-note suggested, however, that it was this species rather than a Red-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps*.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 16, 1)**Dorset** Portland, 14th-18th September (A. S. & R. G. Brett, G. D. Lewis *et al.*) (plate 207).

(North America; winters South America) The seventeenth for Britain and Ireland, but only the second on the British mainland (the first was in Devon in September 1991); all have been in the period 13th September to 12th October.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* (0, 1, 0)**1988 Strathclyde** Ardnave, Islay, ♂, 24th April (C. R. McKay).

(North America; winters South and East USA and Mexico) This is the first record for Britain and Ireland, and the second for the Western Palearctic (the first was an adult female in Norway on 1st June 1987, *Brit. Birds* 82: 354). This species is currently greatly increasing in both numbers and range in the USA. The Islay record has been placed in Category A of the British and Irish List by the BOURC (*Ibis* in press).

Northern Oriole *Icterus galbula* (0, 18, 0)**Essex** See 1991 Essex, below.**1991 Essex** Westcliff-on-Sea, first-year ♂, 2nd December to 24th March 1992, photographed (J. Miller, R. Mullins, C. Todd *et al.*) (plate 208).

(North America; winters Mexico to Venezuela) Another strange bird-at-the-birdtable discovery; this is the eighteenth for Britain and Ireland, and the third record in the midwinter period. It is the first since (and strongly recalls) the long-staying individual at Roch, Dyfed, from January to April 1989.



207. Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Portland Bill, Dorset, September 1992 (B. E. Slade)

2208. First-year male Northern Oriole *Icterus galbula* (with Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*), Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, March 1992 (R. Mullins)



Almost next-door to the site of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* which occurred in December and January 1975 at Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, it adds one more to the inexplicable list of Nearctic passerines wintering in southeastern England, which includes the 1989 Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* and Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* in Kent.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Brit. Birds* 64: 429)

Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (0, 1, 0)

1977 Powys Builth Wells area, 29th November, and various localities in Dyfed to 20th February 1978, photographed (Robert A. Richardson, N. A. & the late Mrs L. A. Tucker, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 86: 229).

1978 Dyfed See above.

1978 Powys See above.

(Eurasia from Iberia to Northern China; winters south to northern Africa, Arabia, India and southern China) Formerly rejected by the BOURC as almost certainly an escape from captivity, but possibility of natural occurrence now acknowledged (*Ibis* 135: 221).

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (0, 1, 0)

1985 Shetland Noss, 25th-26th June, photographed (Ms S. Crosthwaite, Mr & Mrs P. Leward, C. R. McKay) (*Brit. Birds* 86: 229).

(North America; winters south to northern South America) Whilst natural vagrancy is possible, this is also a not uncommon cage-bird (*Ibis* 135: 221).

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include (a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Honorary Secretary; (b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; or (c) those mentioned in 'Seasonal reports' or 'Recent reports' in this journal, if full details were unobtainable. Birds considered to be certain escapes are also omitted.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced, on the evidence before us, that the identification was fully established; in only a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

1992 White-billed Diver Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 12th May; Waxham, Norfolk, 6th December. **Black-browed Albatross** Portland, Dorset, 7th October. **Albatross** Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 31st May. **Little Shearwater** St Abbs, Borders, 15th April; Gwennap Head, Cornwall, 9th August; St Osyth, Essex, 11th September; Strumble Head, Dyfed, 1st November. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** Rame Head, Cornwall, 14th August. **Night Heron** Alderley Edge, Cheshire, 17th May. **Cattle Egret** Poole Harbour, Dorset, 19th March; Grove, Buckinghamshire, 4th May. **Great White Egret** Poole Harbour, Dorset, 10th July. **American Wigeon** Tice, Strathclyde, ♀, 21st May; Langsett Reservoir, South Yorkshire, 16th March. **King Eider** Yellowcraig, Lothian, 6th February. **Steller's Eider** Minsmere, Suffolk, 28th September. **Barrow's Goldeneye** Loch Linnhe, Strathclyde, 6th April. **Black Kite** Minsmere, Suffolk, 10th April; Salhouse, Norfolk, 25th April; Gresham, Norfolk, 9th May; Paston, Norfolk, 10th May; Stowmarket, Suffolk, 13th June; Bolberry Down, Devon, 27th September. **White-tailed Eagle** Langton Herring, Dorset, 14th April. **Eleonora's Falcon** Horsey, Norfolk, 15th June. **Red-footed Falcon** Minsmere, Suffolk, 5th May; Heaton, West Yorkshire, 13th May; Stanford Reservoir, Leicestershire, 16th May; Niton, Isle of Wight, 16th May; Thursley Common, Surrey, 18th May; Stewarthy, Bedfordshire, 22nd May; Shinfold, West Sussex, 25th May; Chaddesden, Derbyshire, 26th May; Colwick, Nottinghamshire, 1st June; St Abb's Head, Borders, 2nd June; Fringinghoe, Essex, 10th June; Kew Gardens, Greater London, 17th June; Harrold, Bedfordshire, 22nd June; Dunkery Beacon, Somerset, 25th June; Tregaron, Dyfed, 8th July; Old Hall Marshes, Essex, 20th July; Tunstall Forest, Suffolk, 24th July. **Gyr Falcon** Bowness Common, Cumbria, 13th February; Brae, Shetland, 17th February; Sea area Forties, 3rd October. **Baillon's Crane** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 31st January. **Pacific Golden Plover** Fair Isle, Shetland, 4th June; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 15th August; Nocton Fen, Lincolnshire, 24th August. **Baird's Sandpiper** Chasewater, Staffordshire, 4th May. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Unst, Shetland, 25th May. **Dowitcher** Spurn, Humberside, 26th August; Castle Douglas, Dumfries & Galloway, 12th October. **Marsh Sandpiper** Theale, Berkshire, 21st July. **Greater Yellowlegs** Montrose Basin, Tayside, 8th May. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Aveton Gifford, Devon, 20th September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Papa Westray, Orkney, 1st June; Brora, Highland, 8th June. **Iceland Gull** *kumhent*, Swillington Lugs, West Yorkshire, 5th January; Aigburth,

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Merseyside, 8th May. **Ross's Gull** St Ives, Cornwall, 11th November. **Gull-billed Tern** Dunbar, Lothian, 17th April; Spurn, Humberside, 10th June; Titchwell, Norfolk, 27th June; Ferrybridge, Dorset, 19th July. **Caspian Tern** Thornton Reservoir, Leicestershire, 20th June. **Lesser Crested Tern** Abberton Reservoir, Essex, 14th August. **White-winged Black Tern** Rutland Water, Leicestershire, 19th May; Alton Water, Suffolk, 29th August. **Alpine Swift** New Brighton, Merseyside, 6th March; Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, 18th March; Watford, Hertfordshire, 7th May; Southbourne, Dorset, 23rd May. **Short-toed Lark** Isle of May, Fife, 24th May; Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 27th May. **Lesser Short-toed Lark** Caldecote Lake, Buckinghamshire, 2nd May. **Crag Martin** Blakeney, Norfolk, 18th May. **Red-rumped Swallow** Paignton, Devon, 19th May; Witton Brook, Cheshire, 8th August. **Red-throated Pipit** Benacre, Suffolk, 2nd May; Blakeney Point, Norfolk, third individual, 28th May. **Citrine Wagtail** Dunwich, Suffolk, 7th July. **Alpine Accentor** Walberswick, Suffolk, 23rd May. **Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin** Woodbury Common, Devon, 19th August. **Isabelline Wheatear** Wadebridge, Cornwall, 3rd May. **Blue Rock Thrush** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 25th July. **Siberian Thrush** Kirkwall, Orkney, 1st October. **American Robin** Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, 27th September. **Paddyfield Warbler** Out Skerries, Shetland, 20th September; Tresco, Scilly, 14th October. **Olivaceous Warbler** Isle of Oxney, Kent, May to August. **Booted Warbler** Foula, Shetland, 4th-5th September. **Greenish Warbler** Out Skerries, Shetland, 29th August; Coombe Hill, Buckinghamshire, 9th September; Avonmouth, Avon, 26th September. **Radde's Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 10th October. **Bonelli's Warbler** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 13th October. **Collared Flycatcher** Worlington, Suffolk, 21st April. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Lulworth Cove, Dorset, 15th June. **Rosy Starling** Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, 27th April; East Mersea, Essex, 2nd June; Gower, West Glamorgan, 29th November. **Trumpeter Finch** Bletchingley, Surrey, 11th August. **Rustic Bunting** Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire, 29th July; Out Skerries, Shetland, 27th September. **Little Bunting** Out Skerries, Shetland, 19th September, three, 27th; Rainworth, Nottinghamshire, 19th October; Skomer, Dyfed, 23rd October. **Black-headed Bunting** Fair Isle, Shetland, 18th June.

1991 White-billed Diver Brora, Highland, 5th December. **Black-browed Albatross** Little Minch, 5th July. **Little Shearwater** Between Isle of Man and Dublin, 5th September; Kettleness Point, North Yorkshire, 7th September; Pendeen, Cornwall, 22nd September; Heysham, Lancashire, 24th September. **Night Heron** Cardiff, South Glamorgan, 15th December. **Black Stork** Barking, Greater London, 29th April. **Ross's Goose** Rockland St Mary and Claxton, Norfolk, 8th-19th February. **American Wigeon** Montrose Bay, Tayside, 22nd October. **Blue-winged Teal** Blacktoft Sands, Humberside, 23rd November. **Canvasback** Armathwaite, Cumbria, 21st-22nd September. **King Eider** Strumble Head, Dyfed, 2nd October. **Black Kite** St John's Lake, Cornwall, 3rd May; King's Lynn, Norfolk, 23rd-28th May; Mountnessing area, Essex, 14th June; Laxford, Highland, 6th August. **Red-footed Falcon** West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 20th June; near Wilstone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, 29th June. **American or Pacific Golden Plover** Skokholm, Dyfed, 11th October; Seaforth, Merseyside, 20th October. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 24th-25th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, 7th, 19th August. **Dowitcher** Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, 20th September. **Marsh Sandpiper** Stewartby, Bedfordshire, 18th September. **Wilson's Phalarope** Landulph Marsh, Cornwall, 27th September. **Laughing Gull** Shibdon Pond, Tyne & Wear, 11th February; South Shields, Durham, 12th February; Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, 28th May. **Franklin's Gull** Holmpton, Humberside, 3rd September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Loch Hallan, South Uist, Western Isles, 13th June. **Gull-billed Tern** Pett Level, East Sussex, 3rd July. **Whiskered Tern** Landguard, Suffolk, 3rd June. **White-winged Black Tern** Pendeen, Cornwall, 17th August. **Brünnich's Guillemot** Faversham Creek, Kent, 6th October. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** Sammy's Point, Humberside, 10th April; Harworth, South Yorkshire, 17th May. **Short-toed Lark** Unst, Shetland, 19th September. **Calandra Lark** Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire, 19th August. **Red-flanked Bluetail** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 9th October. **'Siberian' Stonechat** Fulstow, Lincolnshire, 8th March; Gwithian, Cornwall, 13th December. **Dusky Thrush** Martin's Haven, Dyfed, 27th October. **Dark-throated Thrush** Rendall, Orkney, 4th October. **Greenish Warbler** Hunstanton, Norfolk, 10th October. **Arctic Warbler** Hollingbury Camp, East Sussex, 6th October. **Dusky Warbler** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 10th October. **Collared or Semi-collared Flycatcher** Holkham Meads, Norfolk, 4th September. **Nutcracker** Endon, Staffordshire, November; West Mersea, Essex, 2nd December. **Arctic Redpoll** Thorpe Marsh, South Yorkshire, 6th March. **Two-barred Crossbill** Wakerley Great Wood, Northamptonshire, 5th January; Lynford Arboretum, Norfolk, 15th April. **Parrot Crossbill** Harwood Forest, Northumberland, 13th January; Sheringham, Norfolk, 12th March; Mundford, Norfolk, 21st April. **Nashville Warbler** Cot Valley, Cornwall, 3rd October. **Fox Sparrow** Sennen, Cornwall, 23rd October. **Rustic Bunting** St Mary's, Scilly, 22nd October. **Little Bunting** Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, 23rd March; Tynemouth Head, Tyne & Wear, 14th October. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Whitburn, Tyne & Wear, 1st September.

1990 Pied-billed Grebe Baggy Moor, Shropshire, 1st September. **Albatross** Strumble Head, Dyfed, 12th September. **Little Shearwater** Portland, Dorset, 19th April. **Double-crested Cormorant** Drift Reservoir, Cornwall, 20th August; St Mary's, Scilly, 1st-4th November. **Black Stork** Watford, Hertfordshire, 2nd May. **Glossy Ibis** Cardiff, South Glamorgan, 31st May. **Ring-necked Duck** South Shields, Tyne & Wear, 6th April; Hule Moss, Borders, 7th October. **Surf Scoter** St Andrews, Fife, 7th October. **Black Kite** Well, Hampshire, 7th May; Sittingbourne, Kent, 13th May. **White-tailed Eagle** Stone Creek, Humberside, 22nd October. **Red-footed Falcon** Overstrand, Norfolk, 20th May. **Saker Falcon** Weybourne, Norfolk, 23rd October. **Gyr Falcon** Thurso Bay, Highland, 19th November. **Sora Crane** Skomer, Dyfed, 7th October.

American Golden Plover Swinelleet, Humberside, 18th April. **American or Pacific Golden Plover** Okehampton, Devon, 28th January. **Terek Sandpiper** Breydon, Norfolk, 16th June. **Spotted Sandpiper** Lynher Estuary, Cornwall, 10th October. **Laughing Gull** Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, 29th October. **Slender-billed Gull** Eling Great Marsh, Hampshire, 7th August. **Ivory Gull** Yell, Shetland, 28th January. **Gull-billed Tern** Rame Head, Cornwall, 16th June. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** Woolston Eyes, Cheshire, 18th March. **Alpine Swift** Crayford, Kent, 25th March. **European Bee-eater** Loch of Strathbeg, Grampian, 12th-13th July. **Short-toed Lark** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 12th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Southfield Reservoir, Humberside, 4th April; The Lizard, Cornwall, 8th April. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Frodsham, Cheshire, 13th November, wrongly listed as Isabelline Shrike (*Brit. Birds* 84: 504). **White-cheeked Starling** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 17th-19th May (identification accepted, but considered to be a certain escape, *Brit. Birds* 86: 229). **Rosy Starling** Foreness, Kent, 10th September. **Two-barred Crossbill** Wakerley Great Wood, Northamptonshire, 15th December. **Parrot Crossbill** Harwood Forest, Northumberland, 25th November. **Yellow-rumped Warbler** Aldridge, West Midlands, 24th April.

1989 Pied-billed Grebe Duddon Estuary, Cumbria, 18th September. **Little Shearwater** Mappleton, Humberside, 9th July; Pendeen, Cornwall, 26th August; Uisac Point, Strathclyde, 30th August, 25th September, 23rd October. **American Wigeon** Vane Farm, Tayside, 9th January to 18th February; Loch Fleet, Highland, 29th January. **Ring-necked Duck** Lower Tamar Lake, Devon, 29th August. **Black Kite** Conder Green, Lancashire, 11th July. **Red-footed Falcon** Thelwall, Cheshire, 21st May; Kenfig, Mid Glamorgan, 1st June. **Black-winged Pratincole** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 11th October. **Pacific Golden Plover** Seart, Somerset, 28th October. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Landulph Marsh, Cornwall, 8th September; Hayle, Cornwall, 2nd October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 26th September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Plym Estuary, Devon, 5th January. **Gull-billed Tern** Lancing, West Sussex, 4th June; Flamborough Head, Humberside, 3rd July, 7th August. **White-winged Black Tern** Slapton Ley, Devon, 18th April; Kenfig, Mid Glamorgan, 26th July. **European Bee-eater** Yateley, Hampshire, 27th July; Kenfig, Mid Glamorgan, 27th August. **Red-rumped Swallow** Church Norton, West Sussex, 28th August. **Common Whitethroat** *ultriceps* Bardsey, Gwynedd, 21th May. **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** St Margaret's, Kent, 13th October. **Bonelli's Warbler** West High Down, Isle of Wight, 14th September. **Short-toed Treecreeper** Langney Point, East Sussex, 3rd May. **Penduline Tit** Dungeness, Kent, 18th October. **Savannah Sparrow** Sea area Eastnet, 27th October. **Little Bunting** St Mary's, Scilly, 22nd September; Verne Common, Dorset, 7th October.

1988 White-billed Diver Ness of Duncansby, Highland, 21st January. **Little Shearwater** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 9th August. **Night Heron** Newtown, Isle of Wight, 25th April. **Blue-winged Teal** Long Drag Pools, Cleveland, 29th August; Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, 16th October. **Black Kite** Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 17th April. **Red-footed Falcon** Allerton Bywater, West Yorkshire, 18th-25th May. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Sidlesham Ferry, West Sussex, 20th-30th November. **Wilson's Phalarope** Bude, Cornwall, 30th September to 1st October. **Gull-billed Tern** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 27th May. **Bridled Tern** Cresswell, Northumberland, 31st July. **White-winged Black Tern** Dungeness, Kent, 7th May. **Mottled Swift** Winterton, Norfolk, 24th October; Spurn, Humberside, 25th-27th October. **Red-rumped Swallow** Bowness-on-Solway, Cumbria, 1st May. **Black-eared Wheatear** Salthouse, Norfolk, 17th October. **Greenish Warbler** Craguill Den, Tayside, 16th October.

1987 White-billed Diver Sandside Head, Highland, 31st January; Sandside and Melvich Bays, Highland, 14th-16th August. **Little Shearwater** Sea area Sole, 16th September. **Barrow's Goldeneye** Wheldrake Ings, North Yorkshire, 3rd November. **Red-footed Falcon** Dungeness, Kent, 3rd September. **American Golden Plover** Appleby Magna and Nailstone, Leicestershire, 18th, 22nd October. **Black Guillemot** *islandica* Flamborough Head, Humberside, 25th November. **Isabelline Wheatear** Pennington Marsh, Hampshire, 24th October. **Greenish Warbler** Strumble Head, Dyfed, 23rd August. **Bonelli's Warbler** Howick, Northumberland, 24th August.

1986 White-billed Diver Holy Island, Northumberland, 23rd February. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Hull Docks, Humberside, 9th August.

1985 Arctic Redpoll Vane Farm, Tayside, 26th-29th January (*Brit. Birds* 85: 551), not Highland.

1984 Red-footed Falcon Sheffield Lane Top, South Yorkshire, 8th July.

1983 Short-toed Treecreeper Dungeness, Kent, 30th September.

1982 Arctic Redpoll Scarborough, North Yorkshire, early February.

1980 'Siberian' Stonechat Sefton Meadows, Merseyside, 27th May.

1975 Arctic Redpoll Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, 2nd-15th March.



Letters

Identification of Tennessee Warbler One glance at the coloured photograph of a Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* (*Brit. Birds* 85: plate 267) solved a problem of ten years' standing for me, though the issue was not discussed by Dr Colin Bradshaw in his encyclopedic and amusing account of the identification (*Brit. Birds* 85: 647-649).

The first Tennessee Warbler that I ever saw was a first-autumn bird in September in Bermuda ten years ago. I recorded the colour of the primaries on the closed wing as 'on the blue side of blue-grey' and commented on the contrast with the otherwise generally yellow-green coloration. Nowhere in the literature have I been able to find a reference to this, yet it leaps out in moderate light, as it does in this photograph. Here, indeed, is the feature to stop a Tennessee Warbler being passed over in the autumn fall of Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* that Colin Bradshaw mentioned.

The first two British examples, on Fair Isle, Shetland, in September 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 90-94), were described as having blackish-grey primaries in the hand, but this was not mentioned in the field descriptions. The North American field guides by various authors, including Kaufman (1990, *Advanced Birding*), do not mention or illustrate it. Ian Lewington, in Lewington *et al.* (1991, *A Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe*), showed greyish primaries on the summer adults, but not on the 'female winter/first-winter male'. Even if the blue shade is not universal, the colour of the primaries is quite different from that of any *Phylloscopus* warbler.

ALAN PROWSE

46 Badingham Drive, Fetcham Park, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 9HA

Identification of Tennessee Warbler I very much enjoyed 'Mystery photograph' number 183 on Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*, and the discussion regarding its separation from Old World warbler species (*Brit. Birds* 85: 595, 647-649, plates 267, 300). It is, however, incorrect to state that Orange-crowned Warbler *I. celata* has 'generally more pronounced wingbars' than Tennessee Warbler: Orange-crowned Warblers rarely have even the merest trace of a wingbar. Olive with a yellow tinge is a correct description of a Tennessee Warbler's upperparts, but British birders unfamiliar with Tennessee Warbler should note that the individual depicted in plate 267 has a distinctly more golden-coloured back than most; additionally, its bill is more clearly bicoloured than is usual.

STEVEN G. MLODINOW

4727 Gardner Avenue, Everett WA 98203, USA

D. R. Coan also wrote to us concerning our error in regard to the presence of wingbars on Orange-crowned Warbler. EDS



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The thrush at its nest with young (plate 120) was named as:

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (56%), Hermit Thrush *C. guttatus* (27%), Swainson's Thrush *C. ustulatus* (9%), Veery *C. fuscescens* (6%), Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (1%) and White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (1%).

It was a Grey-cheeked Thrush, photographed in Siberia by A. V. Kreehmar. SCORE 44 for the correct answer. The first person to reach a score of 500 will win a free SUNBIRD trip to Africa, Asia or North America.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.



209. Sixth 'Monthly Marathon', using new rules (see page 149); ninth stage: photo no. 88. Identify the species. Send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK41 3NJ, to arrive by 15th November 1993



Announcement

'BB' trips in 1994 If you're so inclined, you can join a birding holiday, with fellow *BB* readers and a professional Sunbird leader, to Thailand (February-March), Slovakia (April-May), Finland (May) or the Volga Delta (August). You could also pencil into your diary Morocco (April 1995) and Seychelles (July 1995). As a *BB* subscriber, you can claim a 10% discount off the normal price of these trips. Interested in more details? Write to or phone David Fisher/Jennifer Thomas, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; tel.: Sandy (0767) 682969.



Review

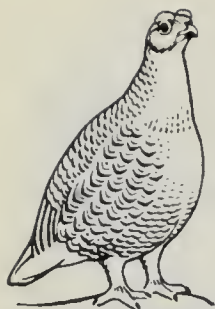
Bird Census Techniques. By **Colin J. Bibby, Neil D. Burgess & David Hill.** Academic Press, London, 1992. 257 pages; numerous figs. ISBN 0-12-095830-9. £19.50.

This book aims to be a practical manual for those engaged in collecting data on bird distribution, bird abundance and habitat distribution. It is not a monographic overview of the whole literature on the subject, nor a complete list of methods in use. Instead, it concentrates on questions such as: Why count birds?; What are the main census methods?; Do the methods meet our expectations?; and What are the main weaknesses of the collected data? The authors describe, evaluate and recommend the following main types of methods applied: territory-mapping, line-transects, point-counts, catching and marking, counting individual species, counting colonial/flocking birds, atlassing, and describing and measuring bird habitats. The text includes few quotations of original sources, but instead concentrates on giving recommendations of what should or should not be done. Boxed figures and examples of proper or wrong applications are especially helpful.

This is undoubtedly a very useful, fundamental guide. Yet, I cannot restrain myself from expressing not only my high esteem for the product, but also some mild disappointment. For years we have awaited a manual on how to perform censuses of birds. The book reviewed is certainly a big step in that direction, yet it is not exactly what we have needed. My criticism comes from the following features of the book: too much bias towards an Anglo-Saxon view of the literature, too much insistence on collection of relative (rather than absolute) data, and a too-narrow (too-practical) view of the purposes of counting birds. For instance, most of the Central-European experience has been ignored (e.g. that developed in the German-speaking countries, such as attempts to combine bird atlassing with quantitative estimates of bird abundance, including the papers by Dr E. Bezzel and others). Further, not everyone treats the mapping technique as a relative method: in Central Europe it is more common to attempt to achieve close-to-absolute results. Those who prefer to see the mapping-technique results as relative should refrain from claiming as absolute the obtained 'densities', by which term a complete estimate of bird numbers per space-unit is understood, in contrast to 'relative density' or 'index of density', which may reflect only a fraction of the true values. Listing the aims of counting birds, the book considers mainly two: for disclosing changes with time (monitoring), and for disclosing differences in space (between habitats). It is true that both may be achieved more cheaply by collecting relative rather than absolute data, but we need quantitative data for other purposes (e.g. for studying the bird-community composition, which requires the discovery of the least biased, and proportional, reflection of the abundance of various species differing in their conspicuousness, or for revealing true local density necessary for proper calculation of the total biomass, population productivity, energy flow, and so on). Such indices are misleading when calculated from incomplete (relative) data.

Finally, there can be two kinds of approach to collecting quantitative data. The first, very appealing to individual students or special-project teams short of manpower, is to collect relative data, which are comparable, but less costly. The second relies on slow, continent-wide accumulation of basic data gathered by different people under widely differing field conditions in various climates and habitats, without a rigid standardisation, since too-strict rules make results from dissimilar habitats hardly comparable. The relative methods require the highest skill and the maximum concentration while working in the field; paradoxically, not infrequently they are selected for use by the less-experienced and less-competent censusers. A strong warning against this should have been raised repeatedly, though without downgrading the methods themselves.

LUDWIK TOMIAŁOJC



Boost for Seal Sands

OVER the last 100 years or so, 90% of the Tees Estuary (Cleveland) has been lost to land claim—the more accurate way to describe what is generally (and wrongly) called ‘reclamation’. Between the 1960s and 1970s, over 80% of what remained of Seal Sands was lost. Despite all this, and greatly reduced wader numbers, Seal Sands has remained an important site, with nationally important wintering numbers of several species.

Now, in what is believed to be the first project of its kind, Enron Europe Ltd has provided £400,000 for the construction of a tidal lagoon, linking an existing pond with the intertidal zone by means of a sluice-regulated large-diameter pipe—in effect, creating a whole new intertidal area which should be of considerable benefit to wintering and migrant birds.

The area is owned by ICI, the pipe was put in by Clugston Construction Ltd and the whole scheme comes under the aegis of English Nature. Such imaginative, co-operative projects between conservation and industry are worthy of praise. We await news of the pool’s ‘first season’ with great interest.

‘The BTO Bird Recording Handbook’

Not a Bill Oddie ‘forklift-truck book’ (*Brit. Birds* 86: 343): this 25-page handbook will fit inside your wallet. The BTO has produced a guide to the why and how of bird-recording, for use by every ornithologist, birdwatcher, birder or casual bird-observer and to the benefit of the county and national recording systems. The workings of the BBRC, the BOURC, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the BTO’s own Nest Record Scheme are all explained. The idea was conceived by Steve Dudley, who compiled and edited the *Handbook*.

Alongside the *Handbook*, the BTO has produced a standard 15 × 10 cm recording card which observers can use to send in their records to any county or regional recorder.

The card will be obtainable free from many local bird recorders, or packs of 100 can be purchased for £2.00 from the BTO. *British Birds* readers can obtain a free copy of *The BTO Bird Recording Handbook* (but PLEASE ENCLOSE A SAE) from the BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Bird Paintings Calendar 1994

Twelve new paintings by members of the Society of Wildlife Artists have been commissioned by Lloyds Private Banking for a large wall calendar, *Woodland Birds 1994*, measuring 43.5 × 31 cm. This is a limited-edition calendar and sales will benefit the SWLA, a registered charity, and help towards the bursary scheme for young wildlife artists set up by Lloyds and the Society (*Brit. Birds* 86: 144).

The paintings are by Hilary Burn, John Busby, John Cox, Robert Gillmor, Robert Greenhalf, Andrew Haslen, Lars Jonsson, Peter Partington, Bruce Pearson, Keith Shaekleton, Andrew Stock and Michael Warren.

Copies are available at £7.50 each (incl. p&p; for overseas orders please add £1.00), from SWLA Calendar, 58 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7HQ. Cheques should be made payable to the Society of Wildlife Artists.

BPY '93

The presentation to this year's Bird Photograph of the Year winners (*Brit. Birds* 86: 245-251) took place in London in June. For the seventh year, the competition was sponsored by Christopher Helm (Publishers) and HarperCollins Publishers. Once again, the awards and prizes were presented by Mrs Dorothy Hosking (plate 210).

Countryside Lines

In an era when we have all grown used to 'What's about' and rarity phone-in services, it is interesting to see that at least one county has adopted the general principle to provide wider information on the countryside.

Dorset County Council launched 'Countryside Lines' in June, offering up-to-the-minute information on all sorts of wildlife (common or rare) and just about every conceivable form of countryside event or activity. Profits from the new scheme will be used to help conservation projects within the county. Dial 0839-777702 to find out how the service can help you.

Encouragement for young bird-photographers

In its first two seasons, the Windrush Photos Award has been presented for the highest-placed British-taken photograph in the Bird Photograph of the Year competition; this year's winner of the Award was Alan Williams (*Brit. Birds* 86: 245-251; plate 210).

Next year, however, the Windrush Photos Award will be presented for the highest-placed photograph submitted by a photographer aged under 21 years on the closing date (31st January 1994). Thus, the Windrush Photos Award will be the BPY's equivalent of the BIY's Richard Richardson Award.



2210. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1993. Left to right, Alan Williams (Winner), Jens Eriksen (2nd), Mrs Dorothy Hosking (Guest Presenter) and Chris Knights (3rd), London, June 1993
(Roger Tidman)



Neotropical Bird Club

The Neotropics (South America, Central America and the Caribbean) is arguably the most biologically diverse region of the world. South America alone contains almost 3,000 land-bird species, more than any other continent, of which almost 300 are now considered threatened with extinction and almost the same number near-threatened. The area is still remarkably unknown ornithologically, with an average of more than two new species being discovered per year.

The Neotropical Bird Club has been launched to promote the study and conservation of birds in the New World. The Club aims to increase awareness of the area and to encourage more research and conservation initiatives. It is hoped that the club will, in time, be able to provide direct funding and support for practical conservation programmes.

The Club will produce a biannual publication, *Cotinga*, to provide a colourful, interesting and much-needed forum for the exchange of information on the area's avifauna. *Cotinga* will contain papers and features on the birds of the region, news of recent observations and discoveries, and articles about their conservation. The first edition of *Cotinga* is planned for publication in January 1994.

The Club is currently seeking founder members to help reach the launch budget of £2,000, required to get the Club running and to publish the first two editions of *Cotinga*. Founder members will be formally acknowledged in the first issue of *Cotinga*.

More details and a membership form can be obtained from Rob Williams, Publicity Officer, Neotropical Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

'BB'-Sunbird Yemen Tour

The debut *British Birds*/Sunbird tour to Yemen commenced in late November and was led by Rod Martins and Jon Dunn.

Eagerly sought species encountered on the highland plateau included several of the strictly Arabian endemics. Notable species included Philby's Partridge *Alectoris philbyi*, Arabian Partridge *A. melanocephala*, African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis*, Arabian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos dora*, Yemen Accentor *Prunella fagani*, Botta's Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*, Yemen Thrush *Turdus menachensis*, Yemen Warbler *Sylvia buryi*, Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens*, Olive-rumped Serin *Serinus rothschildi*, Yemen Serin *S. menachensis* and Yemen Linnet *Carduelis yemenensis*.

Locations visited at lower altitudes reflected the strengthening influence of the nearby African continent, with birds including Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*, Dusky Turtle Dove *S. lugens*, White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*, African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*, Little Rock Thrush *Monticola rufocinerea*,

African Paradise-flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* and Shining Sunbird *Nectarinia habessinica*.

All of the seabirds expected on the Red Sea Coast were seen, as well as surprises such as a flock of 61 Lesser Flamingos *Phoenicopterus minor*, two Sacred Ibises *Threskiornis aethiopicus* and four (wintering?) Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo*.

Inland from the coast, the group successfully found some of the more tricky species of the lowland Tihamah plain, such as Gabar Goshawk *Melierax gabar*, Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*, Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, Arabian Golden Sparrow *Passer euchlorus* and Bush Petronia *Petronia dentata*.

A flock of three Bald Ibises *Geronticus eremita* at Tai'zz sewage-lagoons was a bittersweet highlight: it was a relief to locate the small regularly wintering flock, but saddening to realise that this population's slide towards extinction accelerates with every passing year. (Contributed by Rod Martins & Jon Dunn)

Full circle

A neighbour recently reported to me that a young Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* had been reared in her garden. When I enquired what birds had been the fosterers, her reply was 'Hedge Accentors'.

Amazed, I commented upon her use of this so-up-to-date English name (rather than Dunnock, or, even more likely, Hedge Sparrow) for *Prunella modularis*.

'I don't care what it's supposed to be called these days', she replied, 'I've called it "Hedge Accentor" since my childhood, and I'm not changing now!' (JTRS)

Dolphin sanctuary

We were pleased to hear that, in March 1993, the French and Italian Ministers of the Environment and the Principality of Monaco signed an agreement setting up a 73,000-km² sanctuary for dolphins and small cetaceans in the Mediterranean between the Hyères islands and Corsica. This sea area is apparently used in summer by some 26,000 dolphins and 1,000 whales, which will now be free from drift-netting and a range of offshore leisure activities. We commend the countries concerned and hope that the measures prove successful.

More kite news

With a record 101 nests this year (and, by mid July, some 79 young confirmed as successfully reared), the fortunes of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* in Wales have continued to improve.

In England and Scotland, meanwhile, reintroduction continued; with a total of 21 young reared in the two countries in 1993, more than twice last year's score, all the indications are that this project is going very well indeed.

Change of address of Recorder

Ian J. Andrews, Recorder for Lothian, has moved to 39 Clayknowes Drive, Musselburgh, Midlothian EH21 6UW.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Britton—Northeast

Dave Holman—East Anglia

Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland

David Tomlinson—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

Keith Vinicombe—Southwest

John Wilson—Northwest

Zenèca-BTO challenge

Big business again! Zenèca, the big, ex-ICI international bioscience company, has teamed up with the BTO in issuing a challenge to all British companies to find out which business site attracts the greatest number of bird species. Interested companies must register their site with the BTO and pay a subscription fee related to the size of their site workforce. The monies raised will go towards the BTO's research programme—a thoroughly worthwhile cause. More details from Nick Carter at the BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU; tel. Thetford (0842) 750050.

'Waterlands'

This new campaign, launched by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and sponsored by the Whitley Animal Protection Fund, aims to highlight the importance of our wetlands and to encourage everyone to do more to protect them. It includes a national competition, 'Waterlands Awards for Excellence', with categories involving water-saving and recycling, creating and managing wetlands, reducing waste (which is often dumped on landfill won from wetlands) and reducing energy use. Anyone—from families to big commercial companies—can take part. The closing date for the 1993 competition is 12th November 1993, which doesn't leave you with much time—but 1994 is another year. For more details, get in touch with Caroline Aistrop, Alison Byard or Kim Stiles at the WWT, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT; tel. Dursley (0453) 890333.

Janet Kear OBE

We were delighted to learn that the BOU's President, Janet Kear, who recently retired after 34 years with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (*Brit. Birds* 86: 198), was created an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's birthday honours.

SPBCMFF

Try making an acronym out of that one! Seriously—it stands for the Society for the Protection of British Coastal Marine Flora and Fauna. This is a new conservation organisation; more details from Ray Stokes, 100 Viscount Walk, Bearwood, Poole, Dorset BH11 9TJ; tel. Poole (0202) 594650.

Silly corner

Are proof-readers getting better? Very few bits and pieces have come our way lately, but we did like the Oldc Worlde touch of 'British Trust for Ornithology' in *Bird Watching*.



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 16th August to 12th September 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* Navax Point (Cornwall), 11th September.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* Middlebridge (East Sussex), 29th-30th August (almost certainly the one earlier in Norfolk).

Black-winged Pratincole *G. nordmanni* Blagdon Lake and Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 28th August; Great Liversnore Lake and nearby areas (Suffolk), 6th to at least 12th September.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* Kinsale (Co. Cork), 28th-31st August.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 15th-17th August.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* About 50 in Britain, 40 in Northern Ireland and 15 in the Republic of Ireland from late August to early September.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* South Gare (Cleveland), 11th September.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Tresco (Scilly), 19th-21st August; Beddington Sewage-farm (Greater London), 24th-28th August; Fair

Isle (Shetland), 27th-31st August; Farlington Marshes (Hampshire), 30th August to 2nd September.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* St Agnes (Scilly), 2nd September.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* Guernsey (Channel Islands), 19th August; Fair Isle, 8th-11th September.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 1st-2nd September; Fair Isle, 1st-6th September; Start Point (Devon), 5th September; Fellar (Shetland), 6th September; Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 8th September; Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire), 8th-11th September.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhiola brachydactyla* Dungeness (Kent), 31st August to 8th September.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* Landguard Point (Suffolk), 4th September; perhaps same at Fagbury, Felixstowe (Suffolk), 6th September; Portland Bill (Dorset), 8th-10th September.



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Twenty-five years ago...

On 12th October 1968, Britain's first-ever Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* was found near the Post Office on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, and ten days later, on 22nd October, a second was mist-netted, in Nant withy-bed on Bardsey Island (*Brit. Birds* 63: 153-157).

During 18th-30th October 1968, there was an unprecedented influx of 18 Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus*, almost doubling the previous British total, followed by an unprecedented three Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi*, on the Isle of May, Fife, at Wells, Norfolk, and on Skokholm, Dyfed, during the three days 20th-22nd October, and an unprecedented five Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus*, at Holkham and Holme, both Norfolk, and on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, during 25th October to 1st November. How many were there really?



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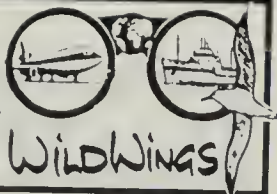
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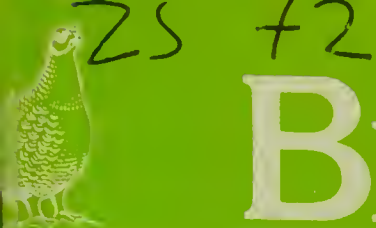
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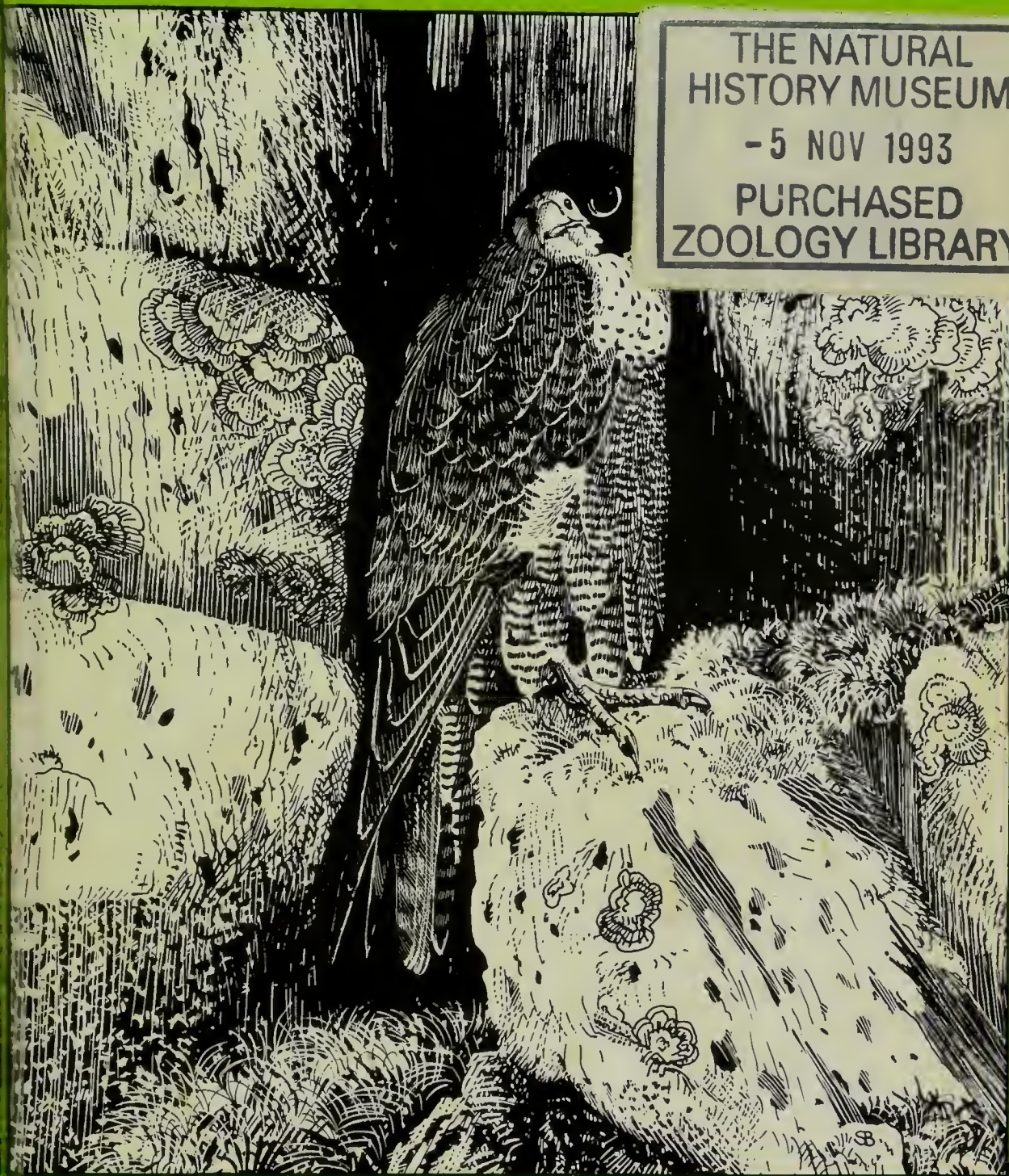
Front cover: Red-eyed Vireo caught in a breeze (*Ren Hathway*); the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 18.6 × 20.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 28 in January issue for procedure)



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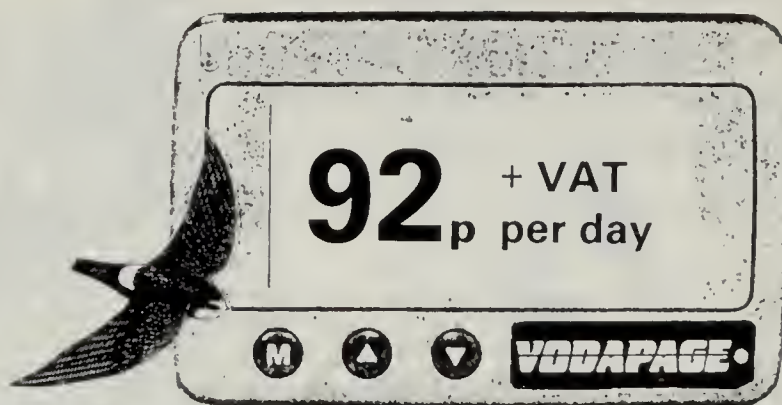
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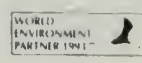
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New BBRC Chairman

Peter Lansdown joined the British Birds Rarities Committee in April 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 417) and was appointed Chairman in late 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 22). During his seven years as Chairman, the work of the Committee (explained by him in two detailed accounts, *Brit. Birds* 80: 487-491; 86: 417-422) has developed and expanded (e.g. the new feature 'From the Rarities Committee's files'), and the work of the Chairman has increased considerably. Peter Lansdown has now, however, asked to be relieved of his duties and, with great reluctance, but also understanding, the Editorial Board has accepted his resignation. We thank Peter for the enormous contribution which he has made through his meticulously thorough work for the Committee over the past 10½ years.

Consultations with all the members of the Rarities Committee revealed one overwhelmingly popular candidate to succeed Peter Lansdown. It is with great pleasure that we can announce that Rob Hume has been invited to take on the very demanding job of Chairman of the BBRC, and that he has accepted this responsibility, starting this month. Rob joined the Committee in April 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 464) and has chosen at present to remain as a voting member as well as being Chairman (his term of office as a voting member would end naturally in March 1996), so no immediate election of an additional new member is needed.

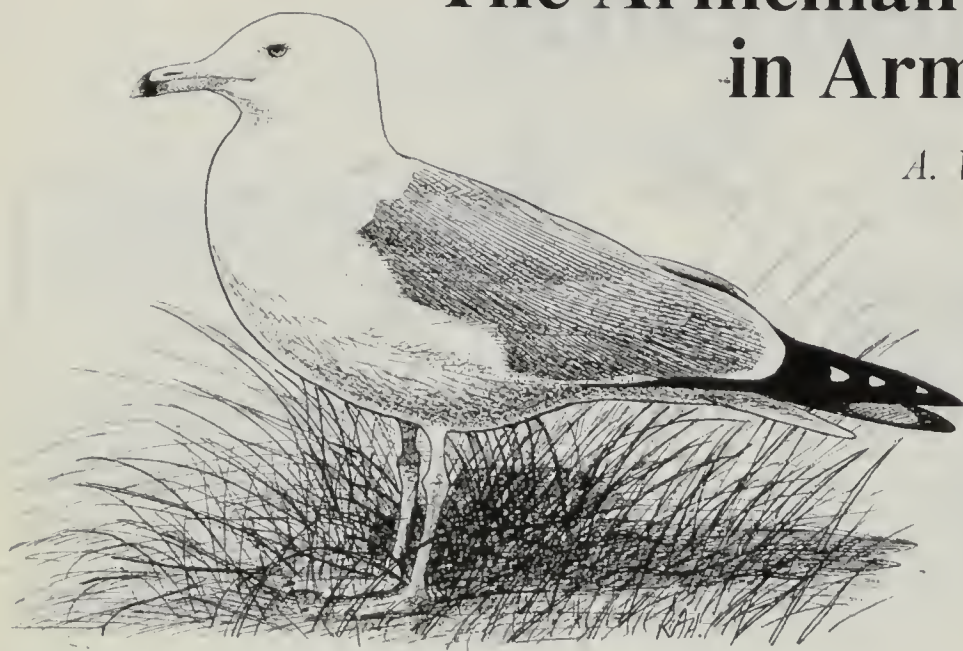
It is worth noting that the BBRC has benefited greatly from the dedication of its Chairmen, who have numbered only four in the Committee's 35-year history: P. A. D. Hollom (1959-71), D. I. M. Wallace (1971-76), the late P. J. Grant (1976-86) and Peter Lansdown (1986-93). EDS

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The Armenian Gull in Armenia

A. V. Filchagov



Interest in the Armenian Gull *Larus (argentatus) armenicus** has increased dramatically since the realisation that this gull showed a characteristic black band on the bill (e.g., G  roudet 1982; Hume 1983; Cramp & Simmons 1983; Dubois 1985; Grant 1988; Satat & Laird 1992). The uniqueness of this character among Palearctic forms of the species/subspecies complex that includes Herring *L. argentatus*, Yellow-legged *L. cachinnans* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* (hereafter referred to as 'the complex') was one of the reasons that led P. Devillers (Devillers & Potvliege 1981; Devillers 1985) and others (e.g., J. Haffer in Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1982) to consider the Armenian Gull a full species. This approach remains debatable, however, owing to the paucity of morphological descriptions and eco-ethological observations from the breeding grounds. Such data are limited to the initial scientific description of this form from Lake Sevan, Armenia (Buturlin 1934a), and brief accounts of its distribution and breeding ecology, mainly from the same place, summarised in regional avifaunistic reviews (Lyaister & Sosnin 1942; Dahl 1954). More recently, only Airumyan *et al.* (1974) have referred, briefly, to these gulls at Sevan.

On 13th-14th June 1990, I visited a colony of Armenian Gulls at Sevan, a lake situated in a mountain valley at 1,900 m above sea level. Studies of phenotypic and behavioural parameters were carried out from a hide at two points within the colony, and during two walks across the colony to ring 200 young. Observations were facilitated by the fair degree of tolerance the gulls showed

* This form, first described as *Larus taihyrensis armenicus* by Buturlin (1934a), was at the same time referred to *L. argentatus* as a synonym of the subspecies *L. a. taihyrensis* by Stegmann (1934); subsequently, it has been considered an independent subspecies or a synonym of the subspecies *taihyrensis* of *L. argentatus* (Vaurie 1965; Cramp & Simmons 1983) or of *L. cachinnans* (Stresemann & Timofeeff-Ressovsky 1947; Stepanyan 1990). Voous (1962) apparently included it in *L. fuscus (sensu lato)*.

Earlier this year, *British Birds* (86: 1-2) announced the decision to treat the Armenian Gull as a separate species, *Larus armenicus*.

towards a human intruder: when I remained motionless, they quickly landed at a distance of 5-15 m and made rapid contact with their young.

History and ecology of Armenian colonies

In the first third of this century, Armenian Gulls bred at several places along Lake Sevan shore and on swamp lowlands nearby. Nests were built in various habitats, including cliffs, reedbeds, sand beaches and even agricultural fields (Lyaister & Sosnin 1942). The gulls were considered to damage fisheries and were therefore persecuted by local inhabitants. Their eggs were also harvested for food (Lyaister & Sosnin 1942; Airumyan *et al.* 1974).

From 1936 until the mid 1970s, the water level was artificially lowered by about 18 m. As a result, the extent of the lake decreased and many physical and biotic elements changed; intensive eutrophication began. The lake also tended more frequently to be covered by ice in winter (Airumyan *et al.* 1974; Rumyantsev 1991). These modifications must have had an effect on the gull population, resulting in a sharp decrease in breeding numbers; it is even likely that breeding did not occur at all in some years. Nesting is now restricted to an area of two small adjacent islands in the northwestern part of the lake which appeared around 1960 as a result of the lowering of the water level. In 1965-69, numbers were estimated at 60-100 pairs or a few more (Airumyan *et al.* 1974).

The situation has since improved greatly. In June 1990, I estimated that about 3,000 pairs were nesting on one island and about 1,000 on the other. The colony not only occupied the islands, but also extended to the nearby shore, where a few tens of pairs were breeding. The islands have recently been included within the Sevan National Park boundary.

Away from Lake Sevan, colonies of Armenian Gulls are known in Armenia only on Arpilich lake (41° 05'N, 43° 40'E), referred to as Lake Arpa by Suter (1990), where gulls nest also on islands and in even larger numbers than at Sevan. These colonies first appeared in the mid 1970s (S. O. Petrosyan, verbally).

This gull's Armenian population seems currently, therefore, in view of the high number of breeders, to be in a healthy state. These high local concentrations, however, probably linked to the scarcity of suitable breeding sites protected from terrestrial predators and human beings, make the population vulnerable to chance factors.

Breeding biology and behaviour

The gulls at Sevan nest mainly among stones and grass, although some nests were placed under the cover of isolated bushes and at the edge of shrubs occupying part of one island. Almost all the open area of both islands was colonised by gulls. Nesting density was high, with frequently only 1-2 m between nests.

V. V. Leonovich, who visited the islands on 27th and 30th April 1990, pointed out (verbally) that egg-laying was in full swing at that time: on 27th, many pairs which had finished building had not yet laid or had incomplete clutches, and at only a few nests were eggs already being incubated; three

days later, the number of nests without eggs or with incomplete clutches had obviously decreased and most pairs had full clutches of three eggs. When I visited in mid June, only two clutches were still being incubated, while the majority of nestlings were 15-25 days old. This indicates that, in 1990, the peak period of laying occurred in the last ten days of April: i.e. 10-15 days later than in Black Sea and southern Caspian Sea colonies (of Yellow-legged Gulls) in years with normal weather conditions (Dyunin 1948; Kostin 1983; pers. obs.).

According to V. V. Leonovich and S. O. Petrosyan (*in litt.*), the average size of 113 eggs was 68.1×48.1 mm, and the average weight of 60 eggs at laying or shortly after was 80.14 g. The eggs seem to be smaller than those of other gulls of the *argentatus-cachinnans* part of the complex (see Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1982; Cramp & Simmons 1983). Among all the East European and Asian forms, the subspecies *heuglini* and *barabensis* seem to be the closest to *armenicus* in egg size (table 1).

The social situation in the colony was rather tense. During my observations, territorial conflicts were not unusual and were occasionally accompanied by prolonged fighting. Adults were sometimes seen to peck at and kill stray nestlings, which they partly ate.

Table 1. Mean size and volume of eggs of subspecies/forms of 'Herring Gull complex' *Larus argentatus-cachinnans-fuscus* within populations of East Europe and Northern Asia

Data for *taimyrensis* from V. Grabovsky (in Filchagov *et al.* 1992); other data author's own (for *vegae*, from eggs deposited in Zoological Museum of Moscow State University)

Volume = $0.51 \times \text{length} \times \text{breadth}$ (see Hoyt 1979); SD = standard deviation

Subspecies/ form	Locality	Years	Sample size	Length in mm (range)	Breadth in mm (range)	Mean volume in cm ³
<i>armenicus</i>	Lake Sevan	1981, 1988 & 1990	113	68.1 (SD 2.3) (61.5-74.9)	48.1 (SD 1.4) (45.1-51.0)	80.4 (SD 6.2)
<i>heuglini</i>	NW Kanin Peninsula	1990, 1991	91	70.0 (SD 3.0) (63.0-76.8)	48.2 (SD 1.6) (45.0-56.3)	83.0 (SD 7.4)
<i>heuglini</i>	Ob Bay	1988	44	69.0 (SD 2.2) (65.1-76.3)	49.1 (SD 1.3) (45.6-51.6)	84.9 (SD 5.8)
<i>barabensis</i>	Lake Saltaim, Omsk region	1990	43	70.8 (SD 2.5) (66.2-76.1)	48.9 (SD 1.3) (46.4-51.9)	86.6 (SD 6.0)
<i>cachinnans</i>	Lake Sarykamysh, N Turkmenistan	1989	70	71.8 (SD 2.7) (65.6-77.6)	50.0 (SD 1.7) (43.5-52.6)	91.9 (SD 8.2)
<i>mongolicus</i>	Lake Baykal	1992	50	73.2 (SD 2.5) (68.3-78.4)	50.3 (SD 1.1) (47.4-52.3)	94.5 (SD 4.9)
<i>taimyrensis</i>	NW Taimyr	1990	30	71.7 (SD 2.7) (66.0-76.5)	49.5 (SD 2.7) (42.2-53.1)	90.65 (SD 8.6)
<i>vegae</i>	Belyaka Spit, Chukotka	1977, 1986-88	30	73.8 (SD 2.8) (68.1-77.5)	50.75 (SD 1.3) (48.5-53.3)	97.1 (SD 6.8)
<i>argentatus</i>	Solovetskie Is, White Sea	1988	50	74.6 (SD 3.3) (67.1-83.2)	50.1 (SD 1.6) (47.2-54.4)	93.6 (SD 15.5)

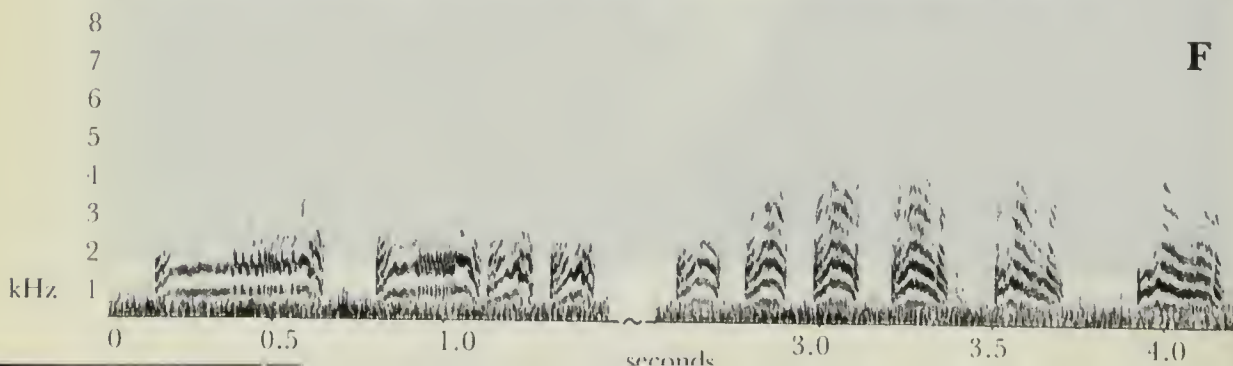
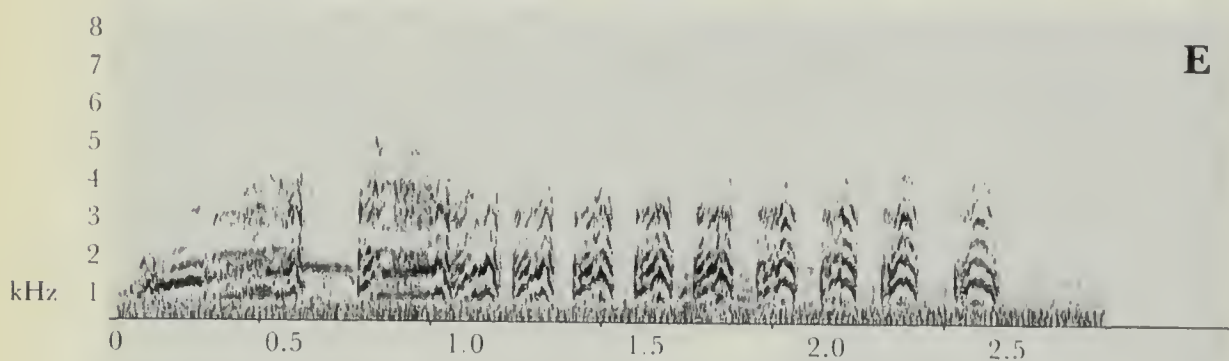
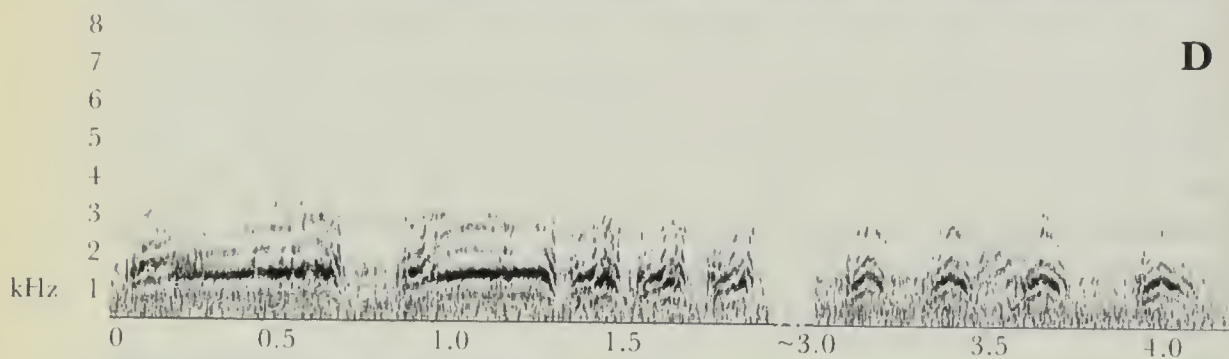
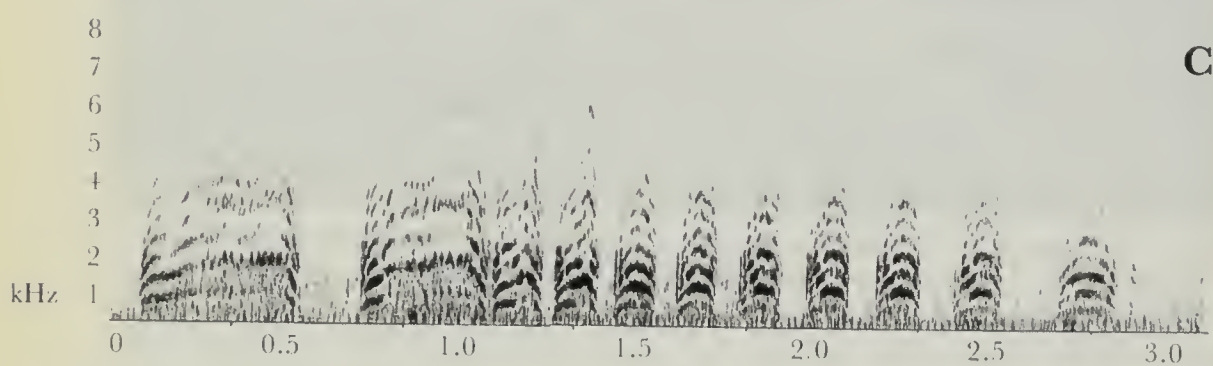
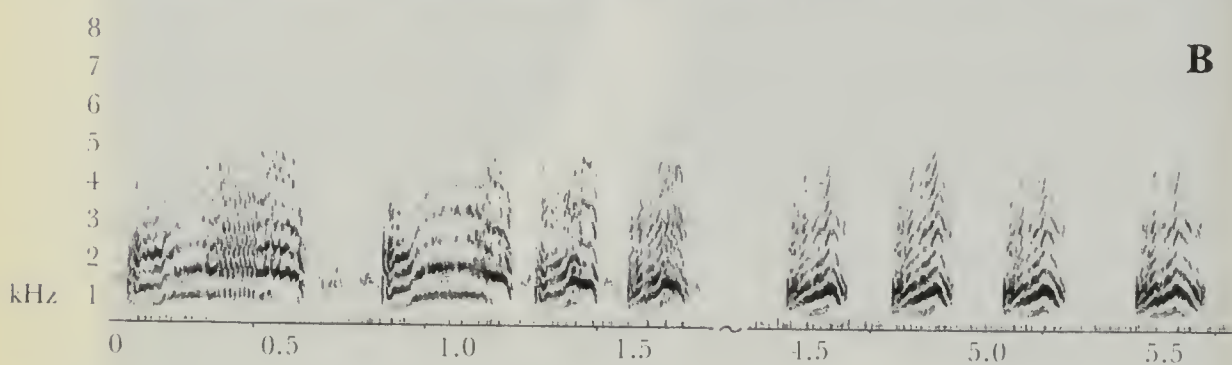
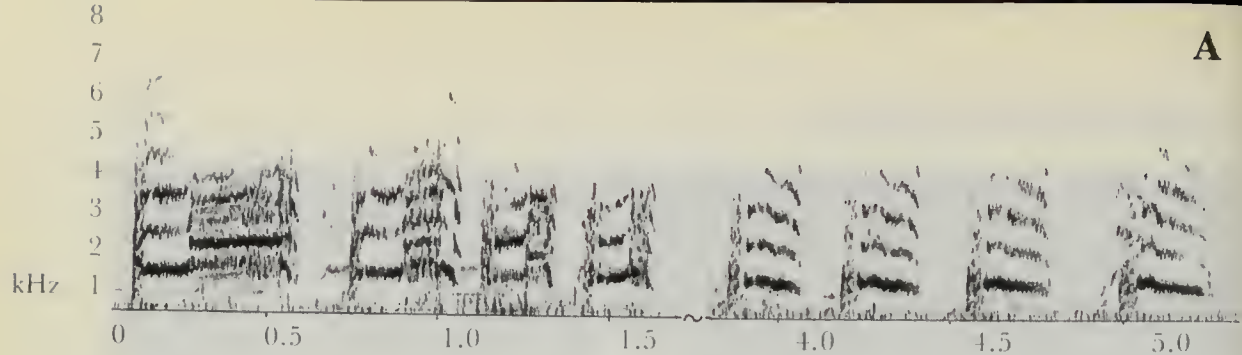


211. Armenian Gull *Larus (argentatus) armenicus* giving 'fuscus-type' Long Call display, Armenia, June 1990 (A. V. Filchagov)

Body movements during the Long Call display resembled those of the Lesser Black-backed Gull, the head movements having a very large amplitude. At times in the Throw-forward phase, the bill nearly touched the belly, and in the Throw-back phase the head almost touched the back. Variations of this display were classified according to head position at the extreme point of the Throw-back phase: *fuscus*-type when the head was perpendicular to the ground surface or nearer to the back (plate 211); *argentatus*-type when the head-neck-back line was straight (plate 212); and intermediate-type. Of 54 displays observed, these types occurred in the ratio of 33:8:13, respectively.

212. Armenian Gull *Larus (argentatus) armenicus* giving 'argentatus-type' display, with straight head-neck-back line, Armenia, June 1990 (A. V. Filchagov)





The voice of the Armenian Gull is quite shrill and hoarse, and not so melodious as that of the Herring Gull. As shown by sonagrams (fig. 1), the harmonic structure of the Long Call resembles that of gulls of the *cachinnans-fuscus* part of the complex. The Long Call is uttered hurriedly, even excitedly, as with *cachinnans*.

A characteristic feature of the Lake Sevan Armenian Gulls was that they regularly held their wings in a somewhat lowered, relaxed position (plates 213-215 on pages 556-557). In other gulls of the complex, such a position is observed mainly in agonistic situations, or when the air temperature is higher. At Sevan, it was the usual position even in obviously calm situations without any social contacts, and at any time in the day, including the cool morning and evening hours.

Structure, plumage and bare-part variations

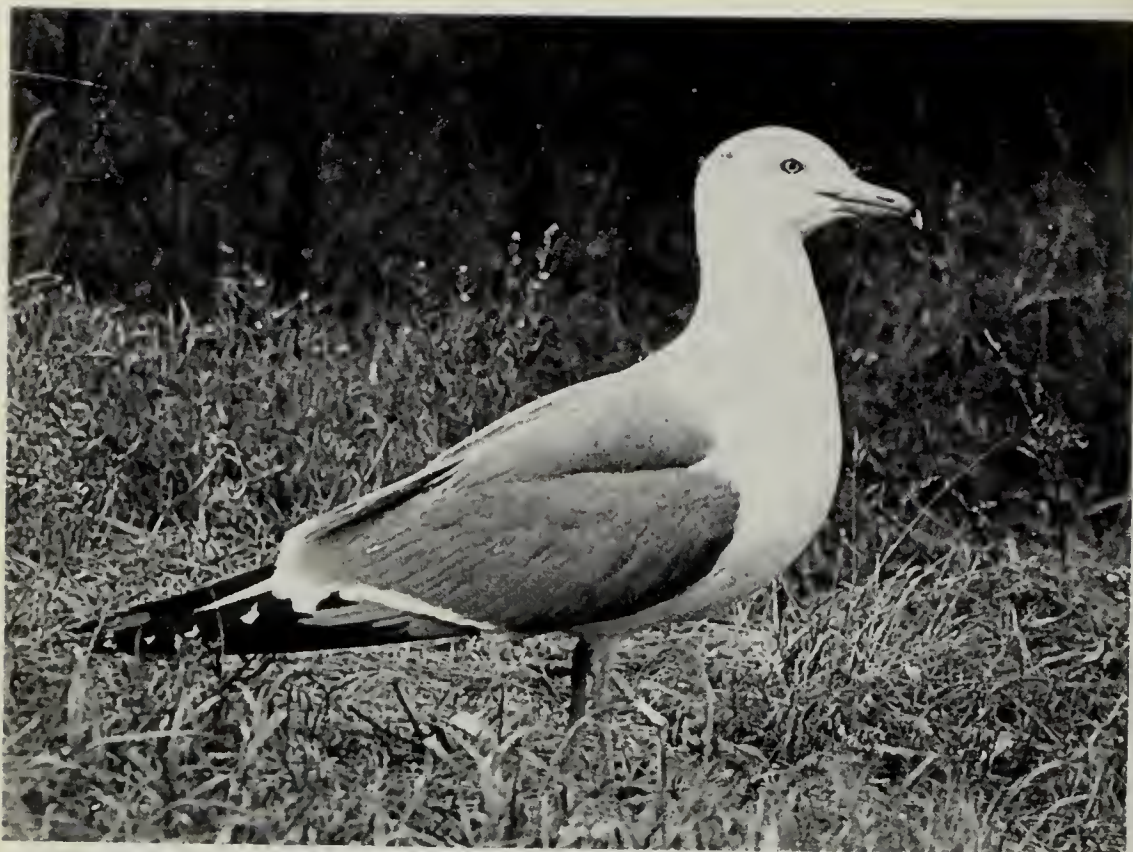
Structural traits such as a comparatively rounded head, blunt-ended bill, short neck (in flight) and others, noted as inconstant or variable on Armenian Gulls in winter quarters (cf. Grant 1988 and Satat & Laird 1992), were typical of Sevan birds. Taken in combination, they can be very helpful for distinguishing Armenian Gulls in the field elsewhere.

Plumage details were carefully recorded for about 150 breeding birds. Of these, 3% had not yet acquired full adult plumage and showed many brown markings on wing-coverts and tail. Those in full adult plumage had a relatively uniform, moderately dark mantle, appearing somewhat darker than *cachinnans*. The wingtip patterns of nine adults found dead in the colony were examined. All had black on seven primaries, and one also had some black on the eighth. A white subterminal mirror on the second outer primary was found on only one, on the inner web. Five birds had black markings on the first three, four or five outermost greater primary coverts, a feature regularly present on adults of other forms (at least *heuglini*, *barabensis*, *mongolicus*, *vegae* and *taimyrensis*: pers. obs.).

All breeding birds had yellow to bright yellow legs and a red or orange-red orbital ring. Iris colour varied from dark brown to pale yellowish: on many individuals (at least six out of 44, from photographs) the iris was pale enough to contrast with the pupil, and in rare cases had no dark pigment (plates 213-215).

Bill pattern, too, was variable. Of 51 gulls examined closely, 33 had an unbroken black band on the upper mandible and a black spot in front of the red spot on the lower mandible, with some variation in the width of the band and the size of the spot. On another 16, the band was more or less reduced to a tiny spot on the upper mandible, again with much individual variation. Two had no black at all on the bill. Band pigment was of variable intensity, and was sometimes more grey than black. A red spot at the gonydeal angle was present on all birds, often extending to the upper mandible.

Fig. 1. Sonagrams of Long Call of different forms of Herring/Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus argentatus/fuscus* complex. **A:** *L. a. argentatus* (recorded by V. I. Grabovsky, Solovetskie Islands, White Sea, June 1988); **B:** *L. f. fuscus* (details as for A); **C:** *L. c. cachinnans* (E. N. Panov, Ogurchinsky Island, SE Caspian Sea, April 1987); **D:** *L. (a.) barabensis* (V. Buzun, Saltaim Lake, Omsk region, May 1992); **E & F:** *L. (a.) armenicus* (V. V. Leonovich, Sevan, Armenia, April 1990)



213-215. Armenian Gulls *Larus (argentatus) armenicus* showing variability of intensity of iris colour (from pale yellowish to dark brown), and loosely held wings, Armenia, June 1990 (A. V. Filchagov)

[Unfortunately, all the negatives of A. V. Filchagov's photographs taken during his trip to Armenia were stolen in a robbery in Paris. The plates accompanying this paper have, therefore, been taken from the only remaining (rough) prints which, fortunately, had been sent to *British Birds* with the first draft of this paper. EDS]





Discussion

The Armenian population of the Armenian Gull suffered a severe decrease from the 1930s to the 1960s, followed by an even more dramatic increase during the subsequent two decades. This recent strong growth could explain why it is only in later years that the characteristic field marks of this gull have become obvious to birdwatchers. The information presented here shows that these phenotypic characters are, however, variable.

A very puzzling fact is that the black bill band, now seen to be present on a large majority of breeders, was not mentioned either in the initial description of this form (Buturlin 1934a), or by other authorities of that time who saw at least some of the type-series specimens (e.g. Stegmann 1934) and observed many Armenian Gulls alive (Dahl & Sosnin 1947). It seems probable that Buturlin and others had good reasons not to include this character in their descriptions; if so, this suggests that the bill band was not so common in the earlier Sevan population, or was less distinctive than it is now.

This is supported by examination of those specimens from the type-series (collected in 1923-28 by G. V. Sosnin: see Buturlin 1934a) which are deposited in the Zoological Museum of the Moscow State University. A wide black band is visible only on one female showing traces of immature plumage (probably a three-year-old). Of three adults in full plumage, one shows no dark pigmentation on the bill; the other two, including the type specimen, show dark (not black) lines and diffuse spots on the bill, which may have been present on the living birds, but which may also, quite naturally, be linked to skin-drying.

The detailed bill patterns of other specimens in old collections that include type-series, which are deposited in Erevan (Institute of Zoology) and St Petersburg (Zoological Institute), are not known to me. In some cases, however, black

is absent or markedly reduced (S. O. Petrosyan and P. Yésou *in litt.*). It appears, therefore, that dark bill markings may already have been present on breeding birds in the 1920s and before, but that they may at that time have been considered to be traces of immaturity or to have resulted from skin-drying. In any event, the frequency of such markings was much lower than it is now. A possible explanation for this discrepancy, suggested by P. Yésou (verbally), is that the markings may be related to age: they should tend to be absent on the older adults which predominate in a stable or decreasing population, as was the case in the 1920s, but should be more or less marked on younger adults, which must now account for a large proportion of breeders.

The present data also confirm that both frequency and the degree of expression of this black bill band vary seasonally, as suggested by Cramp & Simmons (1983), Grant (1988) and Satat & Laird (1992). A black band is found on almost every adult in winter (Satat & Laird 1992; Madge 1992), being so developed that it often masks the red gonydeal spot (Hume 1983; Grant 1988); but it is markedly reduced or absent on one-third of Sevan breeders, and on the other two-thirds is sometimes narrower on the upper mandible and often reduced to a small spot on the lower one.

Iris colour, too, appears to vary seasonally. It is usually dark and only occasionally yellowish in winter (Satat & Laird 1992), whereas a reduction in dark pigment is commoner on the breeding grounds.

Such seasonal change in bare-part coloration may seem a very odd phenomenon to West European ornithologists and birdwatchers, as adults of West European forms of either Herring, Yellow-legged or Lesser Black-backed Gulls are not known to exhibit any change in iris colour, and the occasional dark bill band—found more commonly on Lesser Black-backed, but also on Herring and Yellow-legged Gulls—is usually considered a sign of immaturity (Grant 1986). Iris colour may, however, be more variable (at least in breeding areas), and dark bill markings in winter can develop regularly on adults of other Asian forms, particularly within the *heuglini-taimyrensis-barabensis* group (Hirschfeld 1992; Yésou & Filchagov *in prep.*; see also photograph in Madge 1992 of two gulls labelled 'probably of the subspecies *cachimans*', which in fact look like typical *barabensis*). Dark bill pigmentation also occurs commonly in winter on adult Glaucous-winged Gulls *L. glaucescens* (Vermeer 1963). Furthermore, in some Asian populations, small dark markings on the bill, mostly on the upper mandible, are frequently found on breeding birds in full adult plumage: for example, on 18 out of 29 *barabensis* from the Omsk region examined in the hand (*pers. obs.*).

The Armenian Gull, by virtue of its comparatively small size, certain phenotypical characters of adults (extensive dark on primaries, leg and orbital-ring colours, dark mantle) and its Long Call vocalisation and display, is related to the *cachimans-fuscus* group of the northern Palearctic, and seems closer to *barabensis* and *heuglini*. Its present breeding distribution, restricted to mountain lakes, may be of a relict nature, though this is merely supposition and other scenarios cannot be excluded (e.g., that a northern ancestral form emigrated to mountain lakes, where it found a suitable environment).

Our suggestion that the Armenian Gull is linked to the northern forms through *barabensis* accords with the idea already developed by Buturlin (1934b)

and again, recently, by Bourne (1989). Further studies are needed, permitting a more objective assessment of genealogical relationships and, particularly, the taxonomic status of the Armenian Gull. With our present state of knowledge, the only basis for the promotion of the Armenian Gull to a full species, *Larus armenicus*, appears to be its geographical isolation: a rather weak basis in systematics.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

On 13th-14th June 1990, observations were made at Lake Sevan, Armenia, on phenotypic traits, breeding and behaviour of the Armenian Gull *Larus (argentatus) armenicus*. Historical and ecological data on Sevan colonies are reviewed. The black bill band as well as iris colour were variable on breeders. Black markings on the bill are now the most distinctive feature of the Armenian Gull, but their occurrence seems to have been much less frequent 60-70 years ago than nowadays. Certain phenotypic characters of adults and Long Call display and vocalisation indicate that the Armenian Gull is related to the *cachinnans-fuscus* group of gulls of the northern Palearctic.

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Feral Rose-ringed Parakeets in Britain



David H. W. Morgan

The Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* is found naturally in Central and West Africa and the Indian subcontinent, but has escaped or been introduced in numerous other parts of the world, in many of which it has become successfully established (Lever 1987).

Feral Rose-ringed Parakeets were reported breeding in Northrepps, Norfolk, as long ago as 1855 (quoted in Lever 1977), and the species was also reported breeding in Epping Forest, Essex, in 1930 and at Lilford, Northamptonshire, in 1931 (quoted in Low 1992). For most of the period 1930-66, the importation of parrots such as the Rose-ringed Parakeet was prohibited, but thereafter feral records began to increase. Breeding was suspected in Southfleet, Kent, in 1969, and was confirmed at two sites on the outskirts of South London in 1971 (Lever 1987). By 1979, there were records from 32 counties, with breeding proved in seven and suspected in many others (Hawkes 1979), and, in 1983, observations in 50 counties with breeding recorded in ten (Lever 1987). In 1986, the British population was estimated at around 1,000, mostly in the southeast of England (Lack 1986), although this figure may be an exaggeration.

The species was added to 'Category C' of the British List in 1984 (BOU 1984), with the subsequent decision to treat the race occurring in Britain as 'undetermined' (BOU 1991).

Rose-ringed Parakeets are extremely popular with aviculturists, particularly on account of the latter's penchant for producing colour mutations, more of which have been created with this species than with almost any other psittacine. In the early 1970s, fairly soon after importation recommenced, most of those imported into Britain came from India (Inskipp 1975). In the 1980s, however, the large majority was of African origin (Department of the Environment 1983, 1984a, 1984b, 1985; Commission of the European Communities undated, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992). Although many thousands have been imported since 1966, these numbers are probably dwarfed by those



216. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*, Clacton, Essex, April 1980 (Harry Huggins)

Inclusion of plate 216 in colour has been subsidised by support from Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd



bred in captivity in the UK. In 1987, for example, just 17% of the members of the Parrot Society bred a total of 533 Rose-ringed Parakeets (Coombes 1988), and the total number bred in the UK annually is probably several times this figure. Because more colour mutations have been produced from specimens of Asian origin, these are the kind most commonly kept in captivity (Low 1992; Cooper & Dracup 1978). Some avicultural literature suggests that the Asian specimens in captivity are of the subspecies *manillensis* (Low 1992; Roper 1982), but in practice most aviculturists do not distinguish further than between Asian and African birds (D. Alderton, verbally).

Four subspecies of the Rose-ringed Parakeet are recognised. Table 1 gives their distinguishing characteristics, but these should be treated with some caution in view of the small sample sizes on which some figures are based and the slightly differing ways in which some of the biometrics may have been taken.

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Table 1. Distinguishing features of the four subspecies of Rose-ringed Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

* = data from Cramp (1985); all other measurements from Forshaw (1989)

Subspecies	Wing in mm (mean)	Tail in mm (mean)	Bill in mm (mean)	Weight in g	Upper mandible	Lower mandible
<i>P. k. krameri</i> (Senegal to S Sudan)	♂ 144-157 (150) ♀ 143-152 (148)	194-278 (231) 177-240 (198)	18-21 (19.6) 18-21 (19.8)	51-93* —	Red; black tip	Black; limited red near base
<i>P. k. parvirostris</i> (E Sudan to Somalia)	♂ 146-160 (153) ♀ 148-160 (153)	215-246 (234) 184-218 (196)	19-21 (19.6) 19-21 (19.6)		Mainly red; slightly black tip	Black
<i>P. k. borealis</i> (Pakistan, N India to SE China)	♂ 170-177 (174) ♂ 172-187 (178)* ♀ 170-175 (172) ♀ 168-178 (173)*	226-253 (239) 229-279 (253)* 211-230 (220) 204-238 (221)*	22-25 (23.2) 23.2-26.4 (23.8)* 21-24 (23.0) 20.8-24.4 (22.6)*	104-143* 116-139	Red	Red; sometimes marked with black
<i>P. k. manillensis</i> (S India, Sri Lanka)	♂ 162-180 (170) ♂ 160-169 (165)* ♀ 153-167 (163) ♀ 154-160 (158)*	203-235 (219) 182-235 (205)* 174-210 (193) 164-188 (178)*	22-25 (23.3) 23.1-25.4 (24.2)* 21-24 (22.6) 22.2-22.8 (22.5)*		Red; sometimes black on tip	Black

Of seven feral individuals ringed in Britain (Mead & Clark 1993), some measurements have been acquired for six:

- female, Dorking, Surrey: wing 181 mm, weight 156 g;
- unsexed juvenile, Runnymede, Surrey: wing 177 mm, weight 174 g;
- unsexed juvenile, Runnymede: wing 187 mm, weight 167 g;
- unsexed juvenile, Runnymede: wing 182 mm, weight 144 g;
- unsexed juvenile, Runnymede: wing 175 mm, weight 140 g;
- unsexed adult, Runnymede: wing 183 mm, weight 160 g.

These sizes are far larger than those given in any published references for the African subspecies, and suggest the larger of the two Asian subspecies (*borealis*). The latter are best separated by bill coloration (table 1). Individuals observed in the field at Sidcup, Kent, Margate, Kent, and Wraysbury, Berkshire, appeared to have entirely red bills (R. M. Patient *in litt.*), this also indicating *borealis*, although it should be noted that determining the lower-mandible colour in the field is by no means simple.

Some caution is, however, needed. It is known that, with captive birds, selective breeding and abundant food tend to produce specimens which are larger than their wild counterparts, while in peninsular India, at about 20°N, which is roughly the boundary between the two Asian subspecies of Rose-ringed Parakeet, bill coloration can be variable (Ali & Ripley 1969). Finally, Rose-ringed Parakeets are from time to time crossed with the rather larger and proportionately much larger-billed Alexandrine Parakeet *P. eupatria* (Smith 1979), which has also been reported flying free in Britain, sometimes with Rose-ringed (Patient 1992).

In summary, the feral British population of the Rose-ringed Parakeet would appear to consist of individuals of Asian origin, and probably of the subspecies *borealis*. Further study of individuals in the field and in the hand is required, however, before this can be stated with complete certainty.

Acknowledgments

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Every year, the sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee, *Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd*, presents The Carl Zeiss Award for 'the most helpful, interesting and instructive' photograph of a rarity circulated during the previous 12 months to the members of the BBRC with a submitted record. A short-list of candidates for consideration is selected during the year by the ten members of the Committee, and the final judging is carried out by the Chairman of the Committee and the Managing Editor of *British Birds*.



This year's short-list was as follows:

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*, St Andrews, Fife, November 1991, photographed by D. E. Dickson (plate 180) and Mary Macintyre (plate 181).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, St Mary's, Scilly, September 1992, photographed by David Rimes (plate 179).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* of the race *pallidirostris*, Cape Cornwall, Cornwall, April 1992, photographed by Ren Hathway (plate 196).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*, near Durness, Highland, June 1992, photographed by Dr M. H. Blattner (plates 198 & 199).

The Chimney Swift was found on 8th November 1991 by Dr Jeff Graves, and watched also that day by Dr R. W. Byrne and Professor Peter Branscombe. It was identified jointly by them. Despite its having been watched during its three-day stay by well over 350 birders, the only descriptions submitted were by the finder and RWB. The photographic evidence was, therefore, helpful during assessment of the record.

The Citrine Wagtail was found on the evening of 13th September 1992 by Nigel Benson and Melanie Rose. They were joined the next morning by David N. T. Rimes, and the bird eventually provided good views, sometimes in company with a Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea*. David Rimes's description was the only one submitted, and clinched the identification, but his high-quality photographs were much admired by the members of the Committee.

The Cape Cornwall Great Grey Shrike was originally found and misidentified as a Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor*, but was reidentified as Great Grey independently by Paul Semmens and John F. Ryan, and then as *pallidirostris* by JFR and Renfred Hathway. Excellent sets of notes by JFR and Andrew Birch, together with paintings by AB (see page 503) and RH (see forthcoming account in 'From the Rarities Committee's files'), established the identification. RH's photographs, however, although not of the quality that would have won Bird Photograph of the Year, were invaluable in establishing the precise extent of white in the wing (especially in the flight shot, plate 196), which is so important in the racial identification as *pallidirostris*.

The Trumpeter Finch was found by Dr Martin H. Blattner whilst on a trip to Scotland with the Ornithological Society of Basle, and was watched for ten minutes by him and other members of the group. He was already familiar with the species from the Cabo de Gata region in Spain, and Dr Blattner's

concise description noted that the bird was 'Near but not associated with House Sparrows [*Passer domesticus*], smaller than House Sparrows, plumage sandcoloured (brighter than on the photos), bill and legs pink, so it was a male. See photos. No vocalizations.' The judiciously obtained supporting photographs were enormously welcomed by the Committee when assessing the record.

After some discussion, this year's three judges unanimously selected Ren Hathway as the winner of The Carl Zeiss Award for 1993 for his instructive photograph of the 'Steppe' Great Grey Shrike in flight. Ren Hathway can now choose either a Zeiss 10×40 BGAT*P or a Zeiss 7×42 BGAT*P binocular as his prize. All the other contenders, and those whose rarity photographs or documentary drawings have appeared in the 1992 report (or in 'Seasonal reports'), will receive one of the specially woven sew-on badges featuring The Carl Zeiss Award logo.

R. A. HUME, PETER LANSDOWN and J. T. R. SHARROCK



Mystery photographs



217. Mystery photograph 191. Identify the species. Answer on page 584



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From the Rarities Committee's files

ZEISS

Records not accepted At the end of each annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain' there is a list of records not accepted. Observers, especially those who have submitted records which have appeared under this heading, occasionally express an interest in the precise meaning of the term 'not accepted'. It is readily apparent to the Committee that this term continues to be widely misconstrued.

Various interpretations of 'not accepted' have been suggested by observers, the most frequent being either that the Rarities Committee does not believe the record or that the Committee has positively identified the bird concerned as an alternative, commoner species. Both of these interpretations could correctly be applied to some records, but very rarely. The overwhelmingly commonest reason for non-acceptance is simply that reports contain insufficient detail to prove the identification, hence the avoidance of the more positive term 'rejected'. The terms 'proven' and 'non-proven' would be far more appropriate than 'accepted' and 'rejected', which are publishing-house terms for submitted manuscripts which the Committee has, for better or worse, inherited through common usage.

Sometimes, elements are absent from a description owing to a lack of diligence and attention to detail on the part of the observer. This can be rectified by a personal resolve to compile a full description in logical sequence whenever a rare bird is discovered. By definition, this will not be very often. More frequently, a description is incomplete because of factors largely or entirely beyond an observer's control: brief views, poor light, bad weather, long viewing distance, impeded views owing to the bird's skulking nature, or any combination of these. Such restrictions on a description should be mentioned in the report. Though the resulting gaps are testimony to an observer's honesty, their effect may still be sufficient to prevent the acceptance of the record. It is better, however, to leave such gaps, with due explanation, than to gloss over them by deceit.

Conversely, and much more rarely, there is an increasing number of claims being submitted by birdwatchers who are quite obviously falsifying or embellishing their accounts by means of reference to the literature, from knowledge of the species gained from others, or through personal experience abroad. A few such claims apparently come from observers who, for reasons best known to themselves, engage in intentional fraud. By no means all of these observers are over-keen youngsters anxious to gain kudos. Far more embellished claims, however, are attributable to self-delusion or over-zealousness, afflictions that are not confined to novices or to any one age-group. An extremely rare but dangerous extension of self-delusion is mass hallucination, when a large

number of observers is swept along on a tide of infectious enthusiasm and agrees, quite incorrectly, the identification of the bird in question (some may have had doubts, but have hesitated to contradict their peers).

For each plumage stage of each species, there are minimum requirements for a written description to be acceptable. Essentially, the documentation must be sufficient to eliminate all alternative species and to satisfy the Committee that the evidence would also convince a reviewing body in the future. An observer's high reputation is obviously an important element in the assessment process, but even the best observers are expected to provide cast-iron written evidence. No record is accepted on an observer's reputation alone. Without adequate, convincing documentation, a record has to be placed in the annual list of records not accepted.

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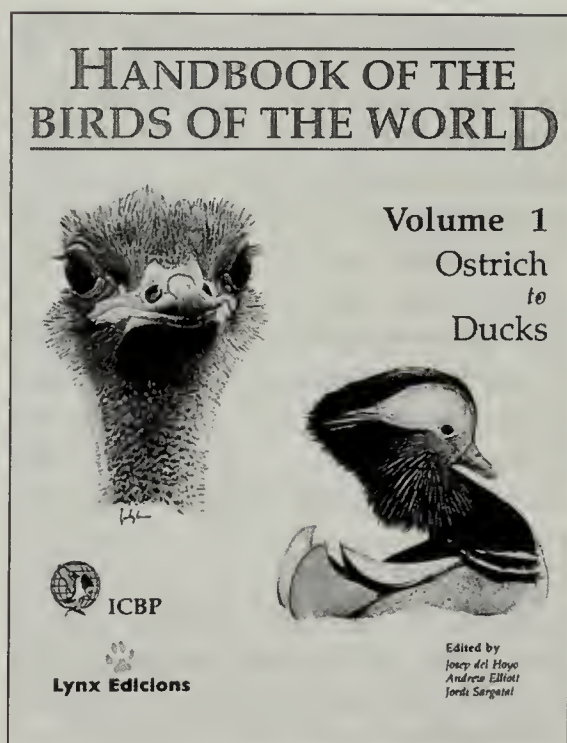
Also in November 1968, a Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* at Welney, Norfolk, during 9th-12th was only the third British record.

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(Review: *Brit. Birds* 86: 190-191)

Two other books were close contenders and are also strongly recommended by us:

Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East. By Lars Jonsson. Translated by David Christie. Published by Christopher Helm (Publishers), London, 1992. £25.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 86: 23-24)

Dunnock Behaviour and Social Evolution. By N. B. Davies. Illustrated by David Quinn. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992. Hardback £35.00, paperback £13.50. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 86: 128)



Notes

Prolonged song of Collared Dove At Newcastle, Co. Wicklow, the 'coo-coo-cuk' song of the Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* is normally repeated in a series of up to five or seven phrases. I have noted it with up to 15 phrases. On 8th July 1993, I counted a song of 62 continuous such calls, then a momentary quiet, followed by a resumption of 17 more.

R. F. RUTTLEDGE

Doon, Newcastle, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland

Prolonged spells of singing are a feature of the small doves *Streptopelia*, but that described by Major Rutledge is especially noteworthy. EDS

Aggressive behaviour of Alpine Swifts at nest On 15th May 1990, near Lumbier, northern Spain, I watched Alpine Swifts *Apus melba* flying noisily into crevices in a rock face some 20 m above me. Two or three often emerged together, usually spilling out and diving a few metres before pulling out into normal level flight. On eight or ten occasions within perhaps ten minutes, they appeared together, sometimes three clinging to each other, with one soon separating off, or two side by side, one holding the other's wing just above the carpal joint with its bill. They flew out from the cliff face in a steep glide, rocking from side to side as one struggled to free itself from the other, or, more spectacularly, two were almost face to face and came down in a flat spin, like a spinning sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* key, until almost at the foot of the cliff. One duo separated only just above the ground, and narrowly missed my head as they pulled out of the final dive. While this happened, they kept up a constant chorus of screaming and chattering calls. *BWP* (vol. 4) implies that aggression at the nest is rare among Alpine Swifts.

R. A. HUME

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Great Spotted Woodpecker killing Robin In May 1990, a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major* was still feeding regularly at a hanging food container in a garden in the New Forest, Hampshire. A Robin *Erithacus rubecula* watched for their arrival and then fed on the crumbs they dropped. This continued for some days, until one of the woodpeckers dropped from the feeder and on to the Robin, and with three quick blows from its bill smashed the Robin's cranium, before resuming feeding. Neither woodpecker touched the corpse thereafter. Great Spotted Woodpeckers are well known to enlarge the entrance holes of nestboxes to reach nestling tits *Parus* inside, but the killing of an adult Robin in the open seems unusual.

GUY MOUNTFORT

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Hedge Accentors feeding from suspended nut containers On several dates between December 1989 and March 1990, from the offices of Space Computer Systems Ltd in Solihull, West Midlands, we saw Hedge Accentors *Prunella modularis* hanging and feeding from a standard red plastic-mesh peanut feeder located about 3 m outside the office window. On each occasion, a single bird was seen to fly up from its normal ground-feeding activity and spend up to 20 seconds at the feeder, before returning to the ground. More than one individual bird was involved, and at least two of the six observed feeding attempts were successful.

STEVEN H. SHAW and SHIRLEY MCKENZIE
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Blackbird hanging upside-down from twigs to feed On 5th May 1990, in a mixed deciduous wood with a few scattered conifers near Crawcrook, Tyne & Wear, I noticed a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* fly to a slender branch almost at the top of a tall old sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. He then moved out along the branch and dropped into the small twigs depending from it, from where he hung by his feet in a more or less horizontal position, belly upwards. He appeared to be collecting insects, possibly small caterpillars, from the young leaves. The Blackbird visited this same branch again and once more hung upside-down, apparently with complete confidence.

KATHLEEN I. BARRATT
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Blackbirds have been observed feeding from hanging nut-baskets (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 69: 371), but the behaviour reported above seems most unusual. EDS

Cetti's Warbler flycatching On 27th March 1990, near Highbridge, Somerset, I spent some time watching a Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*. For most of the period it skulked in typical fashion, occasionally singing. For two or three minutes, however, it perched in full view at the top of a bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, from where it flew out and chased insects, rather like a *Phylloscopus* warbler or even a typical flycatcher *Muscicapa/Ficedula*. On one sortie, it caught, with no difficulty, an unidentified insect the size of a blowfly *Calliphora*, before returning to near its original perch. The weather was unseasonably warm, and unusually large numbers of flying insects were present.

B. J. HILL
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D. T. Ireland has commented as follows: 'I have checked carefully through my copious notes on Cetti's Warbler behaviour and can find no record of having noticed this myself, nor am I aware of any published reference to this behaviour. I accept that it is not generally surprising behaviour for a warbler, but I would suggest that for a Cetti's it really is quite abnormal. My experience is that the birds in southwest England are the most confiding and it is therefore that bit easier to watch their behaviour, but anywhere else, and particularly in the Mediterranean, they are the very devil to see and something like this type of behaviour would stand out like a sore thumb. I therefore think that this observation is extremely interesting and represents quite a departure from what would be expected of this species.' EDS

Exceptional claw-wear of Great Reed Warbler A Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* on Fair Isle, Shetland, during 27th May to 10th June 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 547) spent all its time on a vertical 30-m cliff, and on the beach below, at Maver's Geo, near the bird observatory, apart from its first day, when it was trapped in the Gully, and during a visit to the same trap on 9th June. The cliff was partially covered with clumps of thrift *Armeria maritima* and sea campion *Silene maritima*, amongst which it foraged, working vertically as well as horizontally. Frequently, it crossed barely vegetated rocky outcrops, though it appeared less at home than the resident Rock Pipits *Anthus petrosus*.

It was clearly finding enough food in this abnormal habitat, because its weight increased from 24.0 g to 28.0 g between 27th May and 9th June (both weights taken at 07.45 GMT). Lack of adaptation to the environment was evident, however, from its claw tips, which were normal and without damage on 27th May but by 6th June had worn away almost to the toe.

Doubt has occasionally been cast on records from the Northern Isles of birds with worn claws or other bare parts or plumage (e.g. a 1986 report of European Scops Owl *Otus scops* from Papa Westray, Orkney, accepted recently, *Brit. Birds* 86: 496), the assumption being that excessive wear equates with a captive origin. This note acts as a cautionary tale that excessive wear may also be a feature of birds obliged to forage in atypical habitat, and can happen very quickly.

NICK RIDDIFORD and PETER POTTS
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At least three adult Blue Tits feeding young in same nest In 1990, a pair of Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* raised young in a nestbox about 6 m up on the external stonework frame of a second-floor window of my house in Keighley, West Yorkshire. For the few days before the young flew, I was working daily from 05.00 GMT or earlier at a desk by the window and was able to observe events from 60 cm or so. On 5th-6th June, I noticed that at least three adults were feeding the young. Two had normal plumage and were often seen together; they appeared at the nest more frequently, and I assumed them to be the true parents. A third adult was thinner and scruffier, with darker (melanistic) plumage, and had matted blackish head feathers (it looked as if it had been contaminated with oil or tar). An adult with a slightly blackish, ruffled appearance was almost certainly a fourth individual, though I never saw this and the third together so cannot be totally sure. All entered the nestbox and fed the young, and also stood on top of the box; not uncommonly, two adults were inside the box while a third perched on a metal rod above the window, waiting its turn to enter. On 7th June, the young left the nest: at least five flew straight from the entrance hole between 04.50 and 05.10 GMT, and the sixth, after some encouragement, at 05.24; the seventh, however, needed much more coaxing and did not leave the nest until 06.42, after one or two adults had fed it, called to it, entered the box several times and probably chivied it physically (I heard scrabbling noises from inside, and occasionally glimpsed the chick at the hole). Only the two normal-plumaged adults assisted in coaxing the final two nestlings. I never saw any of the Blue Tits again.

ALISON CLAYBOURNE
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Letters

Red-crested Pochard hybrids The occurrence of hybrids involving Red-crested Pochards *Netta rufina* may not be so unusual as is suggested by A. H. J. Harrop's note (*Brit. Birds* 86: 130). A. P. Gray (1958) recorded hybrids with 11 species of the genus *Anas*, five species of the genus *Aythya* and one within the genus *Netta*. A hybrid male Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* × female Red-crested Pochard apparently produced sterile offspring of both sexes. In 1966, a pinioned female Red-crested Pochard at Dungeness, Kent (released by local wild-fowlers), raised a single male after mating with a male Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*. A portrait photograph of this bird, by Pamela Harrison, is reproduced in *Dungeness Bird Observatory Report 1966*. In 1967, a further two hybrids were reared, but only one, a female, survived. Both hybrids were last recorded in November 1968. As is to be expected, virtually all records of hybrids refer to birds in captivity.

BOB SCOTT

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REFERENCE

GRAY, A. P. 1958. *Bird Hybrids: a check-list with bibliography*. Farnham.

Tits opening milk bottles In a recent letter, J. C. Rae Vernon referred to a paper by Fisher & Hinde (1949, *Brit. Birds* 42: 347-357) as showing that the habit of tits *Parus* of opening milk 'started in two or a few centres'. Since this paper has often been misquoted in this way, it may be worth pointing out that we then interpreted the evidence as suggesting that new records of the habit more than 15 miles (24 km) from a previous record 'probably represent new discoveries of the habit by individual birds'. We reported that, by 1947, there were 89 records more than 15 miles from any other places where the habit had been recorded previously. We wrote 'In England and Wales, then, it seems likely that the habit has arisen *de novo* on an average of at least once per vice-county, and may have arisen more often than this.' In a later paper (Hinde & Fisher, *Brit. Birds* 44: 393-396), we discussed the mechanisms involved in the discovery and spread of the habit and implied that it might have been invented even more often.

ROBERT A. HINDE

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'Italian' Sparrows in Corsica Alan Harris's 'Mystery photographs' text and the editorial comment (*Brit. Birds* 83: 163-164) prompt the following. According to Summers-Smith (1988, *The Sparrows*), Corsica, because of its geographical isolation, has probably the only remaining 'pure' stock of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* of the 'Italian' race *italiae*. When I visited Corsica in

April 1984, however, I discovered, around the houses of a small village just north of Vizzavona in the centre of the island, at an altitude of several hundred metres, two apparently normal grey-crowned male House Sparrows of the nominate race *domesticus*. They were associating freely with, and presumably interbreeding with, the local 'Italian' Sparrows; some female nominate House Sparrows could arguably also have been present. Furthermore, in the following year a male Spanish Sparrow *P. hispaniolensis* was observed at Bonifacio, in the south of the island (D. Farrow *in litt.*).

Birdwatchers visiting Corsica, and presumably elsewhere in the central Mediterranean, should therefore bear in mind that, when trying to determine specific characteristics of female 'Italian' Sparrow, the gene pool may not be so 'pure' as we think. Hence, this may possibly be the reason for the confusion that exists, as highlighted by Alan Harris.

MARTIN S. GARNER

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The smallest book on ornithology I trust I may be forgiven for re-opening correspondence which last appeared in your pages under this heading on 1st May 1928 (*Brit. Birds* 21: 287).

In the first of three letters (*Brit. Birds* 18: 258), Hugh S. Gladstone, later Sir Hugh and noted bibliophile of his day, described a curious little book which he had acquired, entitled *A Natural History of 48 Birds with elegant engravings from drawings by Alfred Mills*. No author was named, but it had been printed for Darton, Harvey & Darton, Gracechurch Street, in 1810. The one distinctive feature of this *opus minimus*, which contained some 96 pages of text and drawings, was that it measured only 2.45 × 2.25 inches (6.2 × 5.7 cm). In this and the subsequent letters, Sir Hugh reported on an 1812 edition in its original red calf cover, an 1816 edition in French, and 1816 editions in English, in pink and in green calf covers. It seems that there were also some differences in layout between some of these five copies.

I now have the pleasure of reporting that I, too, came into possession of a copy of this diminutive work some years ago. It is an 1812 edition, apparently identical in content to that of Sir Hugh's, but, strangely, in a black cardboard cover. To my satisfaction, I have now found a safe and permanent home for it in the RSPB library at The Lodge. It will doubtless be dwarfed by more learned tomes, but I cannot resist drawing attention to the entry entitled 'The Dodo', which is set in the *present* tense. Perhaps the unknown author knew something which nobody else did.

MICHAEL J. ROGERS

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Reviews

The Common Tern. By **Rob Hume.** Hamlyn, London, 1993. 127 pages; 20 colour plates; 4 colour illustrations; 27 line-drawings. ISBN 0-540-01266-1. Paperback £9.99.

This second title in a series designed to be 'scientifically accurate but not overburdened with scientific jargon' successfully achieves that aim. To know terns is to love them for their grace, romantic journeys and survival against the poor odds we make for them—including reluctance to control their increasingly significant predator, the pretty little fox *Vulpes vulpes*. While it might have said more on the birds' protection, here indeed is a book by a man who loves terns very dearly, and it shows. Rob Hume has constructed a reader-friendly treatise from an ocean of literature, using much from kindred spirits George and Anne Marples, who gave us *Sea Terns or Sea Swallows* back in 1934, and from his own observations.

The line-drawings and colour illustrations facilitate separation from the look-alike Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* and Roseate Tern *S. dougalli*, but are a bit arty: on pages 43 and 45, for example, there are unhelpful differences in the vital wing pattern of the Common Tern *S. hirundo*. The photographs are excellent. Where 18 pages are devoted to points of identification, a summary à la Svensson would have been welcome, and a map of the Common Tern's breeding range around the whole of the northern hemisphere would have widened appreciation of this species. It was a small mistake to say that none bred at Dungeness in 1956-58.

This is a book to be enjoyed.

H. E. AXELL

The Birds of Buckinghamshire. Edited by **Peter Lack and David Ferguson.** Illustrations by **Kim Atkinson, Philip Burton, Jane Cross, Crispin Fisher & David Mead.** Buckinghamshire Bird Club, Burnham, 1993. 350 pages; ten black-and-white plates; 42 line-drawings; 98 distribution maps; numerous histograms. ISBN 0-907823-12-2. £11.95.

The long tradition of county avifaunas has served British ornithology well, and this is a most welcome addition.

There are short chapters on the ornithological history of Buckinghamshire (which is meagre) and the topography and habitats of the county, which set the scene, but as always most space is given over to the systematic list, which runs to 264 pages.

Design is spacious, with the outside one-third of each page blank, or containing the appropriate tetrad breeding-atlas map or histograms of seasonal distribution or annual totals. There are occasional decorative line-drawings. The integration of the breeding-distribution maps with the text is especially useful, and estimates of the total breeding population (made by David Ferguson) appear for every breeding species. The maps cover the years 1980-85 (with some limited gap-filling during 1986) and the decision was wisely taken not to incorporate information gathered (regrettably using a different methodology, giving incompatible results) during 1988-91 for *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*. Unlike the accounts of most such surveys, the summary statistics for the maps are given as a separate table, rather than individually with each map, a system for which there are some advantages. Buckinghamshire's most widespread species is the Blackbird *Turdus merula*, found in 88% of tetrads. Another table of losses and gains during the twentieth century shows that nine breeding species have disappeared from the county (all since 1947, the most recent being Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* in 1983, Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* in 1984 and

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* in 1985). On the other hand, 14 have been gained, the most recent being Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* in 1980 and Gadwall *Anas strepera* in 1985.

A collection of county avifaunas forms an excellent basis for an ornithological reference library, and birdwatchers not only from Buckinghamshire itself, but also from all its neighbouring counties, will find a great deal of interest here. How will the Buckinghamshire estimates of 1,000 pairs of Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius* or 15,000 pairs of Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella*, for instance, compare with those from my own county of Bedfordshire? Peter Lack and David Ferguson (and the whole team responsible for the surveys and the book) have provided much interesting reading for the present, and an invaluable source of reference for the future.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Les Pies-Grièches d'Europe, d'Afrique du Nord et du Moyen-Orient. By Norbert Lefranc. Delachaux et Niestlé, Lausanne, 1993. 240 pages; 23 colour plates; 9 colour illustrations; 12 line-drawings. ISBN 2-603-00852-8. FF 195.

Published in association with the WWF, this volume is part of a project to focus attention on the diminishing populations of shrikes (Laniidae) in central Europe. It deals with 11 species found in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East: nine typical shrikes of the genus *Lanius*, plus Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala* and Rosy-patched Bushshrike *Rhodophoneus cruentus*.

A general introduction to the shrike family outlines classification, subfamilies and general characteristics. Monographs on the 11 species follow, each accompanied by a distribution map (showing breeding and wintering areas, and principal migration routes) and a full-page colour plate. The latter depict adult male, adult female and juvenile plumages, but not first-winter (an unfortunate omission, at least in the case of Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus*, where the differences from Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio* of similar age are thus left unelucidated). The texts cover range and systematics, identification, subspecies, biometrics, moult, breeding biology and migration, and are completed with a comprehensive bibliography.

The final section includes a thought-provoking discussion of factors—both natural and man-made—affecting the survival of shrikes, including meteorological changes, habitat destruction, and intensive hunting in certain parts of southern Europe. Policies for conservation are outlined, with recommendations for areas to be designated, where suitable habitat is maintained and the use of chemicals eliminated.

A welcome addition to the relatively limited literature on shrikes: it is to be hoped that both this volume and E. N. Panow's *Die Würger der Paläarktis* (1983) will one day appear in English editions.

A. R. DEAN

Manual of Ornithology: avian structure & function. By Noble S. Proctor & Patrick J. Lynch. Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1993. xi + 340 pages; 4 black-and-white photographs and more than 200 drawings. ISBN 0-300-5746-6. £30.

The *Manual of Ornithology* should not be confused with other volumes bearing similar titles. This is not a general introduction to ornithology: it is an illustrated guide to bird anatomy aimed at undergraduates of North American universities. The dust jacket reveals that it is also meant for 'bird lovers in general', but the publishers are being optimistic. The core of the book comprises chapters on systematics, bird topography, feathers, the skeleton, musculature, the digestive system, the circulatory system, the respiratory system, the urinogenital and endocrine systems and the nervous system. Each is illustrated with a number of large (and sometimes rather odd) drawings accompanied by a text, dissection instructions and a worksheet of questions. Those wishing to learn more about bird structure and function will find much to interest them, written in an accessible form. The last chapter on field techniques seems strangely out of place, with sections including where to look for birds on migration, choosing binoculars, telescopes and tripods, and keeping field notes.

Universities with courses in ornithology will need this volume, but I am not sure who else will buy it. Appropriately, it comes in a dust-jacket from which bloodstains may easily be wiped.

ALAN KNOX



Seasonal reports

Winter 1992/93

*Keith Allsopp and
Barry Nightingale*

Some unchecked reports are included, as well as authenticated records

Mild, unsettled, westerly weather predominated from the beginning of November until 18th December, with high pressure to the south and low to the north. Short incursions of colder Arctic air arrived from the northwest when the centre of pressure moved northwards in mid Atlantic occasionally.

There were no notable arrivals of normal wintering or irruptive species. On 19th December high-pressure systems on the Continent joined with the Azores high, directing the depressions to the north, but allowing cold, dry air to come in from the east, overnight frosts icing over some inland waters. There was some displacement westwards of wildfowl and wintering **Northern Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* and **European Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis apricaria*.

By 4th January, the centre of pressure moved south and the weather turned westerly with a vengeance. A series of depressions tracking eastwards to the north of Scotland brought mild, wet, westerly air to the south, and severe gales in northern Scotland. The first, on 5th, drove the oil-tanker *Braer* ashore on to the rocks at Sumburgh (Shetland) to spill all of its cargo. Most of the local wintering **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and sea-ducks were heavily oiled and perished on the shore. Further gales pounding the islands until 26th served effectively to disperse the surface oil, eliminating that immediate danger. The depression on 10th, setting a record low for the North Atlantic of 916 mbars, was one of several in January to bring very high northerly winds from polar regions on their western flanks. Perhaps in consequence, there was an unprecedented number of **Ross's Gulls** *Rhodostethia rosea* reported, from 17th until the end of March. Up to three were seen at Kinnaird Head, Fraserburgh (Grampian) (plates 218 & 219), with further Scottish records from Inverness (Highland) and Stornoway (Western Isles). There were two sightings at Flamborough Head (Humberside) and others at North Shields and Whitburn (Tyne & Wear) in northeast England, and further singles in the Southwest, at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) and Portishead (Avon). The rough seas also disrupted the wintering patterns of **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla*, with weakened individuals appearing inland; an unusual movement on 25th, following two days of westerly gales, involved 1,000 moving through London

reservoirs, and seawatchers on the Lincolnshire coast logged 1,800 moving northwards.

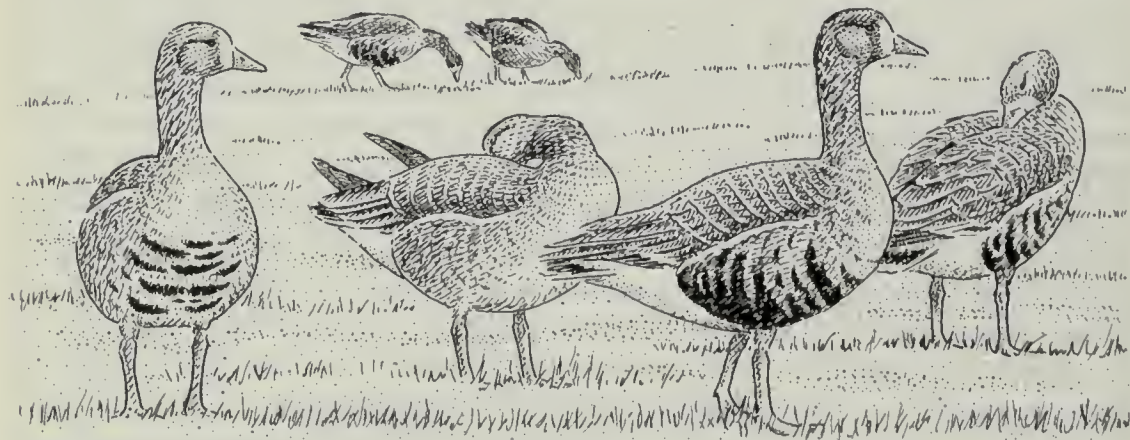
High pressure building from the south at the end of January brought quieter conditions which continued into February, the anticyclone moving northwards to cover much of western Europe with extensive areas of persistent fog, freezing for some periods. A small proportion of the wintering **geese** on the Continent began arriving on the East Coast from Suffolk north to Cleveland from 13th. Some 2,000 were involved, mostly in flocks under 100 strong, with **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* predominant: 560 collected at Breydon Water (Norfolk) by 18th and 650 were estimated in Lincolnshire, while smaller groups wandered across the Midlands to the West. Accompanying **Bean** *A. fabalis* and **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* were mainly in groups of under ten. From 15th, pressure declined to the east and, with the centre now to the west, cold northwesterly air arrived, becoming very cold by the end of the month as winds turned more northerly and then easterly in early March.

From 5th until the end of March, the air came from a more westerly or southerly origin, temperatures increased but, with high pressure close, the weather remained largely settled in the South and East, but the West and North experienced periods of wet and windy weather.

Divers, grebes and wildfowl

Notable concentrations of **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* were reported in the Thames Estuary, with 218 counted at Tilbury (Essex) on 20th December and 440 off Dungeness (Kent) on 29th. In spite of the gales, only a few divers were seen inland, most being **Great Northern Divers** *G. immer* in January, with up to seven individuals. A **White-billed Diver** *G. adamsii* wintered in Shetland and one other was seen in Filey Bay (North Yorkshire) in March. It was an unexceptional winter for grebe reports, apart from a **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* which stayed at Argal Reservoir (Cornwall) throughout and another in Northumberland in

late December and into January. Out-of-season seabird sightings were of **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea*, with two off Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 7th November and one at Filey Brigg on 13th January, and several **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* over the same monthly span. From late January into February, there was an invasion of **Shags** inland, probably displaced by the January gales. On 3rd February, 56 together in Nottinghamshire and 24 in the West Midlands were the largest concentrations, thereafter dispersing elsewhere. The increasing trend for **Great Bitterns** *Botaurus stellaris* to winter in areas not suitable for breeding





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★ **SEVENOAKS WILDFOWL RESERVE** on the A25 between Riverhead and Sevenoaks Bat and Ball station on Sunday 7th November and 5th December.

★ **BOUGH BEECH NATURE RESERVE/RESERVOIR** about 4 miles south of the A25/A21 junction (with access from the B2042 or B2027, the information centre is to the north of the reservoir) on Sunday 14th November and 12th December.

★ **BURTON MILL POND**, 2 miles south of Petworth, W. Sussex (SU 979 181), off the A285. Sunday 21st November.

★ **COLLEGE LAKE WILDLIFE CENTRE** near Tring, Herts, on the B488 (off the A41) close to Bulbourne. Saturday 23rd October and 20th November.

★ **SLIMBRIDGE, GLOS** (off M5) Village Hall (on the left, halfway along village road into the W&WT) Saturday 11th December.

★ **DURLSTON COUNTRY PARK** off the A351 near Swanage, Dorset. In the visitor centre on Sunday 14th November. A NEW FACILITY selling a selection of our binoculars has been opened here (0929 424443)

★ **THE KENT TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION** in the Tyland Barn, near Sandling, Maidstone (off A229, Bluebell Hill, going south), on Sunday 21st November, 10.30 am to 4.00 pm.

★ **HANNINGFIELD RESERVOIR** off the A130 north of Basildon, Essex, on Sunday 24th October (near fishing lodge)

★ **STODMARSH NNR** (TR 220 610) In Information Hut in car park. Take minor road to Grove and Stodmarsh off the A28 Canterbury/Margate road Sunday 28th November.

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9 x 35 Minerva	217
8 x 40 Minerva	221
10 x 40 Minerva	229
7 x 24, 8 x 24 or 10 x 24 MCF	107
HR 60mm scopes	
Std w/22x (WA) & case	260
Std w/zoom & case	285
GA w/22x (WA) & case	290
GA w/zoom & case	320
45° w/22x (WA) & case	285
45° w/zoom & case	325
HR black rubber armoured ED body	(299) 510
30x (WA) eyepiece	53
20-60x zoom eyepiece	105
HR Photokit	72
Filter	10
Rubber hood	7

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10 x 42 Elite (649) 699	
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20x (WA) Eyepiece	164
30x Eyepiece	149
20-60x Zoom eyepiece	218
800mm Camera Adaptor	175
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20x (WA) eyepiece	119
30x (WA) eyepiece	149
20-60x zoom eyepiece	179
60x eyepiece	125
77x eyepiece	138
Cam adaptor 800mm	150
Cam adaptor 1200mm	230
Kowa case	29
Skua case	40
27x (WA) Screw-in-eyepiece	74

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TS-611 body (45°)	316
TS-612 body	296
TS-613 ED Prominar	
Body (45°)	656
TS-614 ED Prominar Body	596
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Angled EDIIA body	589
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60x eyepiece	109
20-45x Zoom eyepiece	169
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Quality filter	13
Rubber hood	8
Stay-on-case	40

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27x (WA) Eyepiece	74

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219. Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea* (above, 'pinkest'; below, 'palest'), Kinnaird Head, Fraserburgh, Grampian, January 1993 (Steve Young/ Birdwatch)



Below, male Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, showing brown neck-ring unusually well, Strumpshaw, Norfolk, March 1993 (Robin Chittenden)





221. Second-winter Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Littlehampton, West Sussex, December 1992 (Ian Carter)

222. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Breydon Water, Norfolk, December 1992 (N. Clayton)



continues: 12 were reported in January and five in February and March. **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* (plate 222) wintering in the Southwest continued, with increased numbers over last year's: about 40 in November, 55 in December, and about 70 in January, decreasing to 60, with more dispersal to Wales and Ireland, throughout the winter. Successful wintering leading to successful breeding may explain this increase. In contrast, **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were present in numbers only during February, with 12 reported during the foggy period on the Continent. Numbers of **Tundra Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* reached 5,000 on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire/Norfolk), 764 at Martin Mere (Lancashire) and 340 at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), all in February, much the same as last year with few young among them. Welney (Norfolk) again attracted most **Whooper Swans** *C. cygnus*, with 856 on 28th February, the Martin Mere flock peaking at 604 also in February. Only 2,500 **White-fronted Geese** arrived at Slimbridge by February, well down on 1991/92. The flock on Islay (Strathclyde) of the Greenland race *flavirostris* was estimated at 10,500 in December. The only report of a wild **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *A. erythropus* was of a marked bird at Slimbridge from the reintroduction programme in Scandinavia. The **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* returned with the 11,000 **Barnacle Geese** at Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway) and remained until March, and another arrived in Essex in January. Up to seven **American Wigeons** *Anas americana*, seven **Common Teals** *A. crecca* of the race *carolinensis*, and nine **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* (plate 220) were reported in each month, similar numbers to last year and probably mostly the same individuals. Up to four **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were found, and three **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis*. Twelve **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* was the total estimated in the scoter flocks off Scottish and Welsh coasts in February. **Smews** *Mergus albellus* were found inland in quite good numbers: the 30 before Christmas increased to over 70 after, mainly concentrated in southeast England, but with individuals well scattered northwards to Scotland.

Birds of prey

Two or three introduced **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* were reported in most of the winter months away from known concentrations. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus*, as in

recent years, were sparsely distributed in eastern coastal areas, with up to seven being seen in any one month. A **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* was a regular on Tory Island (Co. Donegal).

Waders, gulls and terns

Two or three **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* wintered, and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* stayed in Co. Cork and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* in Somerset. The last two vagrant Nearctic species often survive the winter, but their response to the spring migration may well lead to a very difficult attempt to return to their breeding grounds. The rough seas forced five **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* inshore during January, but clearly few attempt to winter at these latitudes. **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were still present in small numbers offshore during the winter, nine being seen in stormy January.

Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* (plate 221) neared 200, also in January, and Nearctic gull reports included one **Laughing Gull** *L. atririlla*, three **Bonaparte's Gulls** *L. philadelphia* and **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis*, whose numbers peaked at about 90 in February, as last winter. The 190 **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* and 95 **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* found in February were obvious displacements from the north, the first species' records including individuals showing the characteristics of the Canadian subspecies *kumlieni*. An **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* found dead in the Channel Islands on 3rd January preceded the storms. A **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* was an exciting find at Musselburgh (Lothian) on 27th March. Two or three **Black Guillemots** *Cephus grylle* ventured south in December, but surprisingly few **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were blown inshore: mainly singles, the largest number being 101 off Anstruther (Fife) on 24th January.

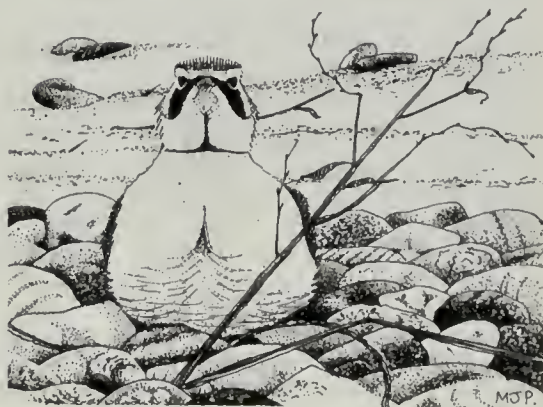


Near-passerines and passerines



Migrant **Wood Larks** *Lullula arborea* were reported in November, four in Essex and one in Worcestershire, and a flock of 30 in Cornwall in January; March migrants included three in Kent and one in Cumbria. **Horned Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* were found along the East Coast from Northumberland to Suffolk: the total of 75 in November was significantly higher than last winter's influx, and most of the subsequent total of 50 were at Titchwell (Norfolk), where 32 were regular. **Water Pipits** *Anthus spinoletta* wintered in good numbers again, with 20 collecting on Cley Marshes (Norfolk) in February. Only a few **Bohemian Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* arrived this winter: 15 in March was the maximum monthly count. Late-staying autumn migrants included a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* on 26th December, a **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria* in Essex on 4th-6th

December (killed by a cat) and a **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* in Cornwall on 14th December. Two or three **Yellow-browed Warblers** *P. inornatus* survived through the winter, and there was some dispersal of resident **Dartford Warblers** *S. undata*, with four being found in non-breeding areas. Wintering **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* in the Channel Islands were estimated at between 50 and 100, in contrast to 26 for England, which increased in March to 60 as spring movements began. **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* stayed on about 14 winter territories, and there were good concentrations of **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla*, with flocks of 200 and 800 in northwest England in November and December and 1,000 in Cornwall in January. **Lapland Longspurs** *Calcarius lapponicus* were scarce this winter, with a few East Coast flocks of 20. A **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* was a surviving winter rarity in Lincolnshire, from 5th December into March. Two **Little Buntings** *Emberiza pusilla* wintered in England, continuing a pattern, one in Oxfordshire and another at Beddington Sewage-farm (Greater London). The latter locality also held a **Rustic Bunting** *E. rustica*, from 9th February to 13th March, and another appeared at Maidstone (Kent) in late March.



Acknowledgments

This summary was compiled from contributions from: M. Dryden, I. Kinley, P. E. Lynch, E. R. Meek, P. Murphy, M. Wallen; and published information including that in the newsletters of the Bristol Ornithological Club, Buckinghamshire Bird Club, Derbyshire Ornithological Society, Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society, Fife Bird Club, Hampshire Ornithological Society, Hertfordshire Bird Club, La Société Guernesaise, Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society, Leigh Ornithological Society, London Natural History Society, Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers, Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Shetland Bird Club, Shropshire Ornithological Society, Société Jersiaise, South East Scotland Bird Bulletin, Surrey Bird Club, Sussex Ornithological Society, West Midland Bird Club, Fair Isle Bird Observatory and Gibraltar Point Bird Observatory. We are especially grateful to Rare Bird News, which supplied copies of all the records reported to its phone service, and to Birding South West.

Keith Allsopp and Barry Nightingale, 7 Bloomsbury Close, Woburn, Bedfordshire MK17 9QS



Announcements

The 'BB' Award for the Best Annual Bird Report Entries are invited for the third annual award (see account of the first and second awards, *Brit. Birds* 85: 299-308; 86: 163-165), which is open to all those clubs and societies in Britain and Ireland which publish an annual bird report. The aim of the Award is to provide public acknowledgment of the high quality of publications which may generally be seen only locally, and to encourage and promote high standards in all regional bird reports.

We hope that every local bird club and society in Britain and Ireland will submit a copy of its annual report for consideration by the judges.

The senior editor of the winning report will receive an inscribed book of his choice as a permanent personal memento of the award, and the club or society publishing the winning report will be authorised to use the logo of the Award on their reports and in their advertising and promotion.

Entries (which need consist only of a copy of the club or society's 1992 report and a covering note stating the number of members, the price of the report and from whom it can be obtained) should be submitted at once if available (the closing date for entries is 15th December 1993) to Bird Report Award, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



Tee-shirts and sweat-shirts Exclusively designed for *British Birds* readers, in a natural bottle-green. Tee-shirts available in four sizes (M, L, XL and XXL), and sweat-shirts in the three larger sizes. Tee-shirts feature the Red Grouse logo and the words 'I'm a British birder'; sweat-shirts feature the Mike Everett drawing of a birdwatcher sitting under a small tree (*Brit. Birds* 84: 27) and the words 'British Birds'.

Prices (including VAT) are £7.50 for tee-shirts and £13.50 for sweat-shirts (not available in M size), plus £1.50 for p&pp per order.

Please make cheques payable to 'British Birds' and send orders to Mrs Ali Gathercole, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, or phone credit-card orders to her during office hours on Biggleswade (0767) 40467. (Credit-card orders can also be made outside office hours on the answerphone: please quote name, address, numbers of each product, sizes required, card number and expiry date.)

'BB' ties Available exclusively to *BB* subscribers, these distinctive ties in blue, green, brown or maroon feature our Red Grouse logo in white. Price £6.95 (incl. VAT) post free. Please order from Ali Gathercole, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, quoting quantity of each colour and your *BB* reference number.

Books in British BirdShop The following books have been added this month:

- Clark & Eyre *Birds of Hampshire* (Hampshire OS)
- Davies *Dunnock Behaviour and Social Evolution* (OUP)
- Sibley & Monroe *A World Checklist of Birds* (Yale UP)

Please use the form on pages ix & x for *all* your book orders.

January issue Please remember that the January issue of *BB* is always posted in mid January rather than in late December. A few panic-stricken subscribers phone us early each January about non-receipt of the first issue of the year.

If your address label was red, you will have received a renewal reminder with this issue; it would help the efficient distribution of next year's *BB* if you returned the form to us as soon as possible. Thank you.



Mystery photographs

191 The fairly long neck, pot belly, short and slightly decurved bill, and scaly upperparts readily suggest that our mystery bird (plate 217 on page 566) is a *Calidris* wader, or perhaps a Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*. Discerning the size of a lone wader in the field, let alone from a photograph, is more than often fraught with difficulties. The methodical observer would do well to try to age the bird. We have no idea when the photograph was taken (although the amount of abrasion visible on the tertials and the greater coverts would not suggest a 'fresh' juvenile) and must therefore concentrate on plumage characters to narrow the options. Very few *Calidris* waders of any age show the amount of underparts streaking, particularly on the belly, flanks and vent, exhibited by our bird (and this eliminates Ruff). Even fewer show a pale, but clearly defined, basal area to the bill, thus eliminating Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*. In the Western Palearctic, on these two features alone, we can narrow the field to just four possibilities: Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata*, Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*, Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta* and Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima*. The last of these can immediately be eliminated, since our bird exhibits a comparatively short bill and also has prominent streaking around both the nape and the ear-coverts (Purple Sandpiper would appear dark, and unmarked in these two regions).

Our bird has a prominent supercilium which is at its broadest behind the eye, whereas that of a Pectoral would be more prominent in front, and the crown pattern seems to be clearly demarcated from the nape, giving the bird a capped appearance, lacking the uniformity of crown and nape associated with Pectoral. Furthermore, the pale eye-ring is very obvious and, although not a feature generally associated with Long-toed Stint, it is evident on many Pectorals, though rarely reaching the prominence of that shown by Sharp-tailed. With the pendulum now swinging in favour of Sharp-tailed, the underparts pattern becomes the sole clinching factor. At all ages, Pectoral Sandpiper exhibits a vertically streaked breast that forms a downward point at the lower edge, contrasting with an essentially white belly and vent. A similar, but perhaps less striking pattern is shown by Long-toed Stint, but our bird shows breast streaking (with no hint of a lower-edge demarcation) that continues into bold, ventrally pointing chevrons extending onto the belly, flanks and vent. This underparts pattern is diagnostic of and, indeed, unique to Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in summer plumage. This individual, photographed by Yasuo Ueki in Japan in 1984, has not yet attained full summer plumage; the fairly abraded tertials and greater (except the penultimate inner pair), median and lesser coverts are retained greyish winter feathers, while the scapulars are the immaculate dark-centred and pale-fringed feathers of nuptial dress, although several are missing from the upper row.

HUGH R. HARROP

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Forests and the future

NOT ALL THAT LONG AGO, criticism of the Forestry Commission was almost a daily event. The design and, very often, the location of commercial plantations seemed to work against the best interests of birds and other wildlife, and various aspects of forest management appeared to make the general situation even worse. This has changed dramatically, and nowadays our state foresters can rightly claim to have achieved an enormous amount for wildlife conservation, in all its forms. In August 1993 alone, we received Press Releases from the Department of Forestry concerning the Government's go-ahead for 'Community Forests' (for recreation and conservation) east of London, in south Staffordshire and in Tyne & Wear; another described wetland restoration in the new Delamere Forest Park in Cheshire.

All this positive action, though, is taking place against a background of a possible new threat of very large proportions: the privatisation of our state forestry system, currently under consideration by government. How you regard the principle of privatisation depends, to a large extent, on your politics, but the effect of privatisation on our state-owned and state-managed forests is another matter altogether. Conservation bodies such as the RSPB are rightly asking some very pointed questions. What guarantees are there that the private sector will be able (or even willing) to continue the excellent conservation work currently undertaken by the FC? Will vital wildlife areas be sacrificed for commercial gain? Will the likely amount of subsidisation needed to maintain the *status quo* make a nonsense of any savings to the nation achieved by selling off the FC? And what about the promised national strategy for our forests?

Birdwatchers will not be the only ones worried about future access arrangements to large areas of forest. There are lots of worrying questions here, but not many answers so far. It seems to us that there are very large clouds massing on the horizon . . .

Additions and changes to the British and Irish List

The latest report from the BOU Records Committee has just been published *Ibis* 135: 193-199).

One species is added to Category A:

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Two records: Saltash, Cornwall, 30th August 1982, and Hamford Water, Essex, 17th-23rd May 1988. In both cases, the BOURC considered that there was a high likelihood of assisted passage across the Atlantic on board ship. (Two other records were accepted, but one at Worms Head, West Glamorgan, during 24th July to 11th August 1978 occurred when the likelihood of escape from captivity was high, so it was placed in Category D1, and one at Blakeney Point, Norfolk, during 20th-28th August 1971 was considered to be a probable escape, so was not admitted to any category.)

One species is transferred from Category A to Category D:

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* Ten British records were assessed, identification accepted for five, but regarded as unproven or not acceptable for the other five: Essex 1906 and Norfolk 1929 accepted but high likelihood of escape, so not admitted to any category; Grampian 1958, Dorset 1969 and Dumfries & Galloway 1973 accepted for Category D1. An Irish specimen from Co. Fermanagh, originally thought to be a first-year, proved on re-examination to be an adult and is not accepted on the main Irish List (*Irish Birds* 3: 335).

One species is removed from the British and Irish list:

Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura* After review, none of the four British records (Fair Isle 1912, Cheshire 1943, Fair Isle 1953 and Kent 1954) was considered to be acceptable.

Five species are added to Category D:

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* Added to Category D4, as the feral population in Britain totals over 80, is expected to increase and should be monitored.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* Added to Category D4, as the feral population in Cambridgeshire has reached about 130 individuals and should be monitored.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* Added to Category D1. Eight records during 1975-88 were accepted (three may relate to one individual); natural origin is possible but unlikely, whereas the species is common in captivity.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

Added to Category D1. Two records accepted (Staffordshire 1973 and Avon/Somerset 1984-85). This is one of the commoner ducks in captivity here, but a natural origin is also possible.

Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar* Added to Category D4, to encourage monitoring of the current large feral population (of pure Chukar and Chukar × Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa* hybrids), which is, however, expected to become extinct within a few years.

After review, one species is retained in Category A:

White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*

Three records are no longer considered acceptable (Sussex 1917 and 1933, Hertfordshire 1955), but two are still regarded as satisfactory: Sussex 22nd November 1869 and King's Lynn, Norfolk, 22nd-24th October 1981.

Two subspecies are added to Category A:

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* Only two records of the black-headed race *feldegg* are accepted: Fair Isle, Shetland, male, 7th-9th May 1970, and Skateraw, Lothian, 28th April 1984.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* A record of a male of the race *variegata* from the Caucasus is accepted: Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 1st-4th October 1985.

Deletions include the nominate race of the Merlin *Falco columbarius*, the race *delicata* of the Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and the nominate race of the Horned Lark *Erenophila alpestris* (see also 'Richard Meinertzhagen—a case of fraud examined' by Alan G. Knox, *Ibis* 135: 320-325).

Species considered but not admitted for any category, despite identification being accepted, include White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, seen in several counties 1978-80 (common in captivity, rare in the wild in Western Europe), Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, February 1991 (high escape likelihood, low likelihood of natural vagrancy, especially in February), and Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus*, on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, June-July 1988 (high escape likelihood, low likelihood of natural occurrence of this individual, which 'showed anomalous plumage conditions').

After these changes, the British and Irish List stands at a total of 550 species (522 in A, 19 in B and 9 in C), with an additional 20 species in the limbo of Category D, which is not part of the List.

Escapes in Finland

The Finnish Rarities Committee has been tackling the ticklish matter of escapes from captivity (*Lintumies* 6: 194-199; 240-247), just as this problem has been addressed here by the BBRC and, especially, the BOU Records Committee.

After reviewing the status of over 40 species on the Finnish List, the Committee transferred seven species from its Category I (genuine vagrants) to Category III (presumed escapes): Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*, Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*, Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus*, Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*, Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* and Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*.

These seven now join 17 other species which were already in the Finnish Category III: Little Blue Heron *Hydranassa caerulea*, Chilean Flamingo *P. (ruber) chilensis*, Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*, Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (but also in Category I on the basis of some old records), Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*, Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*, Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*, Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*, White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*, White-shouldered Starling *S. sinensis*, Yellow-throated Bunting *E. elegans*, Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*, Painted Bunting *P. ciris* and Lazuli Bunting *P. amoena*.



*If you think that our annual *Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky Christmas puzzle is devious, just consider this explanation, from Hannu Jännes, of the caption to this cartoon: 'Direct translation of "Seitsemän veljeksien siivouspäivä" is something like "The clean-up day of seven brothers". There is, however, a famous old Finnish book about seven brothers (quite simple and uneducated boys) and their adventures, so the sentence has a more complex meaning than just seven brothers doing some cleaning. "(ON) . . . GELMAJÄTTI" means "(Pr) . . . oblem waste" and "III LUOKKA" means "Third grade"; Ongelmajäte is dangerous, very toxic waste, which is difficult to get rid of, "III Luokka" signifying that it is the most poisonous of all. Note also, however, that presumed escapes were formerly placed in so-called "category III" in Finland (equivalent to your "category D"). Finally, the cartoonist's name, "E. T. Pinnamätkä", is an inside joke. The word means something like "E. T. Travellingtwitcher", but it is an anagram of the real name of the cartoonist, who is Matti Kapanen, a former member of our Rarities Committee.'

'Bird Watching' highlights

Among the several commercial birdwatching magazines available not only by subscription, but also on the bookstalls these days, *Bird Watching* complements (and seldom competes with) *BB*. We are happy to co-operate with *BW*, and shall be drawing attention each month to its current main features. (*BW* will be doing the same for *BB*.)

The November issue of *BW* includes Blyth's

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and other UK rarity photographs; Ian Wallace's personal history of British birdwatching; 'County Call' on Glamorgan; the BTO's New Year's Bird Count preview; and an article on 'Choosing the right bird holiday'.

It sounds like an interesting mix. Why not give *BW* a try?

Paleartic party

'It's a sort of wake', chortled Max Nicholson, diabolical smile and camera flashing gleefully at the assembled staff of *Birds of the Western Palearctic* and Oxford University Press. The occasion was the farewell party at Wolfson College, Oxford, on 29th July, to mark the conclusion of producing all eight volumes of *BWP* (the final volume will be published next year).

It was a rare meeting of generations, a reminder that *BWP* started a very long time ago, and could not have survived without the support and commitment of many people. Max (now in his ninetieth year) recalled that, for him, the birth pangs started with the vacuum created by his despatch of the Hastings Rarities affair in the early 1960s.

It was good to see other early baton-carriers, such as James Ferguson-Lees, Ken Simmons

and Pat Sellar. Robert Gillmor was there to see one of his water-colours presented by Chris Perrins to Ruth Wootton, who typed nearly every word of every volume.

Of course, thoughts strayed often to our departed chief, Stanley Cramp. Like a surprise magician, D. I. M. Wallace sprang to his feet after chocolate mousse to declare that, being a Celt (to which his splendid tartan trews bore ample testament), he had the gift of communing with the other side, and brought greetings from Stanley, who incidentally 'apologised to his office staff for smoking too much and being a bit bad-tempered at times'.

The atmosphere was a mixture of joyful celebration, and not a little relief that the tiger's back had successfully been ridden.
(Contributed by Euan Dunn)

BTO+SOS

The SOS is the Shropshire Ornithological Society, which gets together with the BTO at a joint one-day conference on 'Water birds in Shropshire' at The Shirehall in Shrewsbury on 13th November 1993. The cost is £10 per person, which includes coffee, lunch, tea and conference fee. For full details, contact Ken Bird, 41 Bromley Road, Bicton Heath, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY3 5AZ, or phone Shrewsbury (0743) 363807, as soon as possible.

Rarity descriptions

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major autumn rarities are submitted by mid November at the latest. *Please do not wait until January.* Thank you.

(Contributed by M. J. Rogers)

Fewer Wood Pigeons

Some statistics published by Organbidexka Col Libre (OCL) earlier this year, based on their regular counts at several passes in the French Pyrénées, show a huge drop in the numbers of Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus* migrating across the mountains in autumn. OCL counted 464,000 at Organbidexka alone in 1981, but only 164,000 in 1992. The trend is confirmed from another source: the Pyrénées-Atlantiques Hunting Federation counted 308,807 in 1981 and 91,200 in 1992. No reasons were advanced for what appears to be a massive decline in what has always been the most spectacular trans-Pyrenean migrant.

Icelandic wildfowl stamps

The Nature Conservation Council of Iceland has issued two wildfowl stamps in support of land acquisition and wildfowl conservation at Lake Mývatn. More details from the Council at PO Box 5324, 125 Reykjavik, Iceland.

The tern business

We are always glad to hear of industry taking positive action to help birds, so a note from National Power telling us that they donated £10,000 to the Merseyside Ringing Group this year was particularly interesting. The money was given to enable the Group to improve and enlarge the tern islands they have installed and maintained at the British Steel site at Shotton, Deeside. No fewer than 312 pairs of Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* bred on the islands in 1992, making the site the best one for this

species in Wales. Over many years, the Group's activities have enabled this population to grow and grow: they were awarded the Prince of Wales Award for conservation in 1971. Their ringing has shown that the Shotton terns winter in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Liberia. The hope was for an increased colony at Shotton in 1993, so we look forward to hearing whether this was realised.

Bert Hamar

It is always sad to hear of the passing of one of those indefatigable, much-loved people who have been the backbone of our local and regional birdwatching clubs and societies. Such a man was H. W. (Bert) Hamar, who died in May, aged 73. He founded what has become

the thriving Gwent Ornithological Society, and recently served as its President. The GOS has instituted the Bert Hamar Research Grant as a memorial to his life and work; available to GOS members, it will (appropriately) be awarded for bird research within the county.

Adopt a duck

If you phone Liz Lancashire on Dursley (0453) 890333 before 15th December 1993, you will be in time to learn more about the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's current duck-adoption scheme. More duck-adopters are needed: the proceeds from the scheme go towards the expensive business of maintaining the Trust's centres, all of which provide valuable havens for wintering wildfowl.

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Anthony McGeehan—Northern Ireland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Dr Kenny Taylor—Scotland

David Tomlinson—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

Keith Vinicombe—Southwest

John Wilson—Northwest

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



Monthly marathon

September's bird (plate 138) was named as: Little Gull *Larus minutus* (94%), Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* (3%), Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia* (2%) and Franklin's Gull *L. pipixcan* (1%).

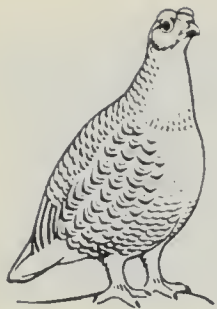
No trap, it was a Little Gull, photographed by Axel Halley in Germany in October 1988 (SCORE 6). The first person to achieve a score of 500 will win a birding trip with SUNBIRD to Africa, Asia or North America.

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223. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149); tenth stage: photo no. 89. Identify the species. Send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th December 1993



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 13th September to 17th October 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* First-winter plover showing some diagnostic features of this species at Ballycotton Co. Cork, 29th September, and again on 9th October, but not definitely subsequently.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Single juveniles at Courmaesherry (Co. Cork), 1st-3rd October, and at Kinsale (Co. Cork), 6th-8th October.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* Hayle Estuary Cornwall, 3rd-4th October.

White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis* Singles at Courmaesherry, 6th October, and Kinsale, 6th-8th October.

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* North Ronaldsay Orkney, 4th-7th October.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Hayle Estuary, 11th October.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* First-winter at Blennerville Co. Kerry, 1st October.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* North Ronaldsay, 4th-5th October.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Porthmadog Gwynedd, 17th October.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* Foula Shetland, 3rd October; St Mary's Isles of Scilly, 6th to at least 17th October.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Unst (Shetland), 4th October.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Rye Harbour (East Sussex), 16th October.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 17th October.

Pechora Pipit *A. gustavi* Fair Isle (Shetland), 27th to at least 30th September.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Fair Isle, 18th-26th September; Ballycotton, 21st September.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Fair Isle, 15th-16th September.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* Lerwick (Shetland), 1st October.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* Tresco Isles of Scilly, 11th October and 15th to at least 17th October.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* St Mary's, 7th-14th October; St Agnes Isles of Scilly, 15th-16th October.

Dark-throated Thrush *T. ruficollis* Fair Isle, 11th October; St Martin's Isles of Scilly, 13th-14th October.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* Two, Fair Isle, 17th September.

River Warbler *L. flaviatilis* Fair Isle, 26th-27th September; Out Skerries (Shetland), 9th-10th October.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Ringed, Fagbury Cliff (Suffolk), 19th September, and another there on 4th October; St Kilda (Western Isles), 6th October (found dead on 7th); Out Skerries, 9th-10th October.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* North Ronaldsay, 14th September.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* North Ronaldsay, 3rd October; St Agnes Isles of Scilly, 3rd-4th October.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* St Kilda, 4th October, Fair Isle, 10th October.

Penduline Tit *Renzia pseudulinus* Three, Land's End (Cornwall), 11th October, and up to eight by 13th October; Tresco, 15th and 17th October.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* First-winter, Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 3rd October.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* Cape Clear Island, 7th-16th October.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* Brownstown Head (Co. Waterford), 3rd October.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork), 10th October.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Phenictus ludovicianus* Tresco, 12th-14th October.



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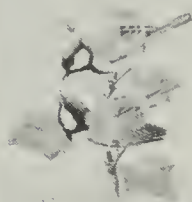


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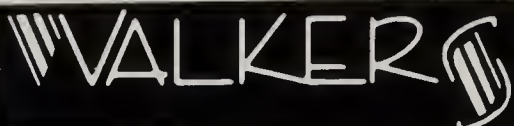
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550 **The Armenian Gull in Armenia** *A. V. Filchagov*

561 **Feral Rose-ringed Parakeets in Britain** *David H. W. Morgan*

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Front cover: Female Peregrine Falcon (*Stuart Brocklehurst*): the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 18.5 × 20.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 28 in January issue for procedure)



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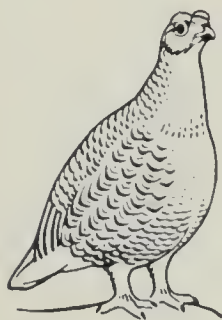
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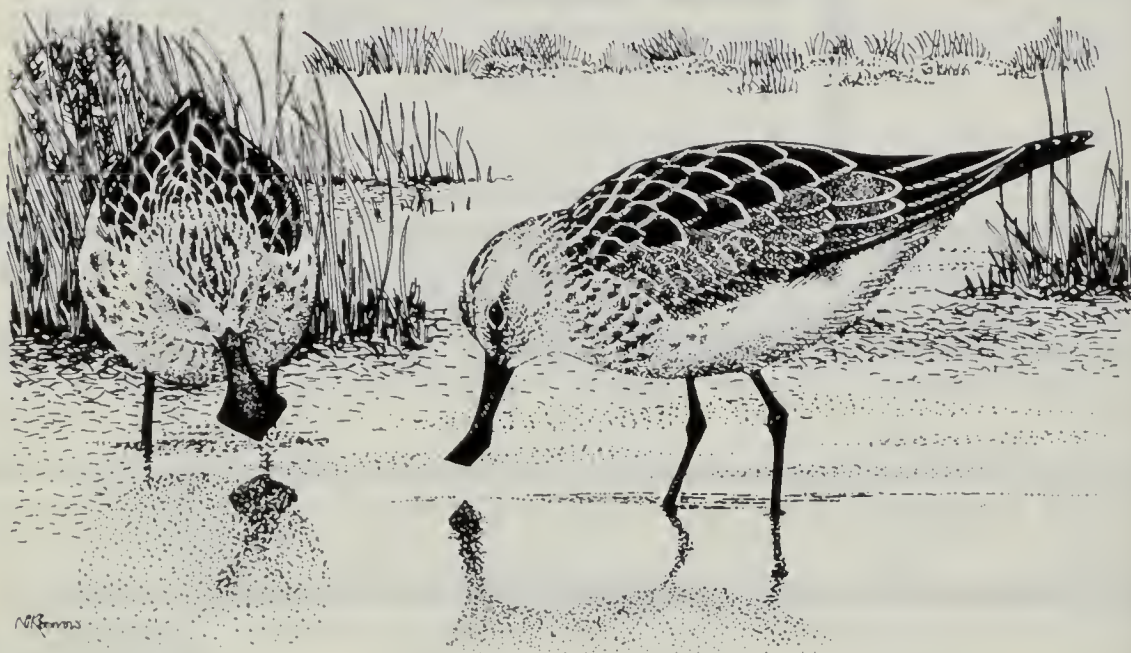
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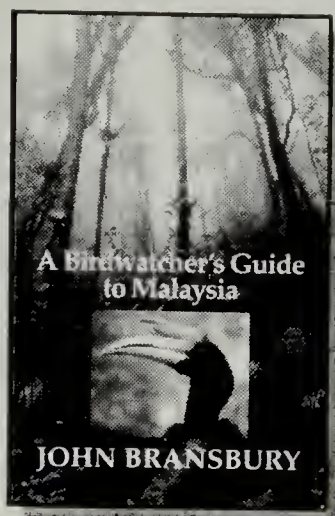
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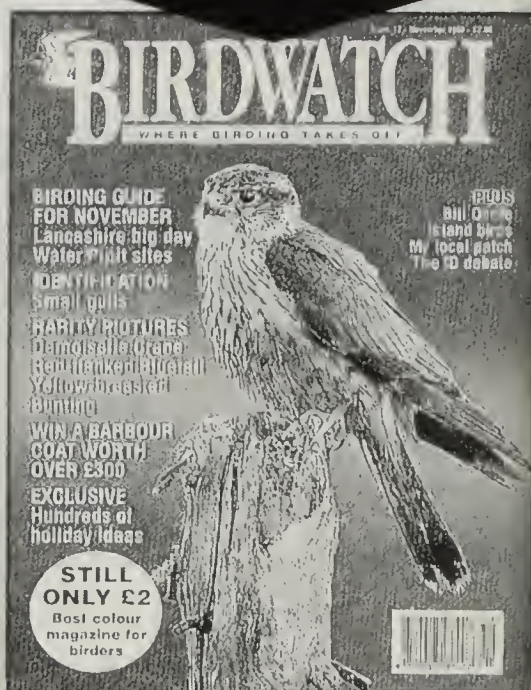
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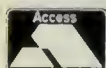
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Introduced and escaped geese in Britain in summer 1991



The Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* and the Greylag Goose *Anser anser* have large introduced populations in Britain which are expanding rapidly. A remarkable diversity of other goose species of captive origin is also now at large, and small numbers of a great variety of hybrids are to be found. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust organised a survey during the moulting period of Canada and Greylag Geese (late June to mid July) in 1991 with the principal aim of producing population estimates for these two species. These have been reported in detail elsewhere (Delany 1992, in press), so, although they are summarised again here, the main purpose of this paper is to document the status and distribution of the less numerous species and hybrids.

Coverage

A total of 2,226 sites within 835 10-km squares was visited during the survey period. Introduced geese have never been recorded over much of Highland Scotland, nor elevated areas in central and south Wales and southwest England, and nil returns were received from most such regions. Two regions missed in 1991 were covered in 1992. The main problem with such site-based surveys is that incomplete coverage can result in underestimates, the extent of which may be difficult to assess. The level of commitment to this survey shown by Regional Organisers and counters was, however, extremely high, and the final counts are thought to be within 10% of the true totals.

Abundance and distribution of introduced geese

The number and diversity of species of introduced geese, and of hybrids between them, found during the survey were remarkable, and are summarised

in table 1. The analysis that follows deals with each species in turn, in order of abundance, and with hybrids in a separate section.

Table 1. The number of each age category of each species or hybrid counted during a survey of introduced geese in Britain, June-July 1991

Numbers in parentheses are of free-flying individuals held by private collections and included in the totals

Species or hybrid	Adult	Juvenile	Not aged	Total	
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	43,871	13,030	6,680	63,581	
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	11,737	4,908	2,856	19,501	
Barnacle Goose <i>B. leucopsis</i>	817	83	25	925	(421)
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	660	196	50	906	
Snow Goose <i>Anser caerulescens</i>	148	20	14	182	(22)
Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	69	7	12	88	
Bar-headed Goose <i>Anser indicus</i>	74	9	2	85	(6)
White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons</i>	40	3	31	74	
Bean Goose <i>Anser fabalis</i>	32	0	0	32	(30)
Lesser White-fronted Goose <i>Anser erythropus</i>	29	0	0	29	(15)
Emperor Goose <i>Anser canagica</i>	14	0	0	14	
Brent Goose <i>B. bernicla</i>	8	0	1	9	
Swan Goose <i>Anser cygnoides</i>	4	0	4	8	
Ross's Goose <i>Anser rossii</i>	3	0	0	3	
Red-breasted Goose <i>B. ruficollis</i>	2	0	0	2	
Totals	57,508	18,256	9,675	85,439	
Canada × Greylag	208	46	8	262	
Canada × Barnacle	11	2	0	13	
Greylag × White-fronted	9	4	0	13	
Greylag × unknown	9	1	0	10	
Canada × White-fronted	0	7	0	7	
Canada × (Greylag × 'Chinese')	0	5	0	5	
Greylag × Snow	5	0	0	5	
Canada × Snow	4	0	0	4	
Greylag × Bar-headed	2	0	1	3	
Canada × Bar-headed	2	0	0	2	
Greylag × Barnacle	0	2	0	2	
Greylag × Swan	0	0	2	2	
Lesser White-fronted × White-fronted	2	0	0	2	
Canada × Swan	1	0	0	1	
Barnacle × unknown	1	0	0	1	
Blue Snow × Barnacle	1	0	0	1	
Snow × Barnacle	1	0	0	1	
Snow × unknown	1	0	0	1	
Hybrid totals	260	67	11	338	
Grand totals	57,768	18,323	9,686	85,777	

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Altogether, 63,581 Canada Geese were counted at 1,210 sites in 603 10-km squares. This indicates a mean population density during the moult period of 53 individuals per site, or 105 per occupied 10-km square. The number of Canada Geese counted has more than tripled since the previous survey, in 1976 (Ogilvie 1977), indicating an average annual rate of increase of 8.3%. Sample counts undertaken for the National Waterfowl Counts scheme have suggested an identical national trend in winter numbers between 1961/65 and 1989/90 to that revealed by these surveys (Owen *et al.* in press).

The range of the Canada Goose in Britain has expanded since 1976, but the main effect of the population increase has been a rise in population density from an average of 14 individuals per

occupied 10-km square in 1976 to 105 per square in 1991. The population has spread, especially in peripheral areas, and Canada Geese were found in 37% more squares in 1991 than in 1976.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

The remnant native population of this species in northwest Scotland was not covered by this survey, which concentrated on the population that has arisen from the deliberate scheme of reintroduction coordinated by wildfowling interests, mainly in the 1960s. A total of 19,501 Greylag Geese was found at 447 sites in 320 10-km squares. This indicates a mean population density during moult of 44 individuals per site or 61 per occupied 10-km square.

Wright & Giles (1988) showed that, at Great Linford (Buckinghamshire), Canada and Greylag Geese co-existed readily and at high density, and experienced both high nesting success and considerable population increases between 1974 and 1987, although gosling mortality was higher among Canada Geese than among Greylags. During the 1991 survey, many sites supported large numbers of both species, and the proportion of juveniles was, on average, considerably higher for Greylags (30%) than for Canadas (23%).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

A total of 925 Barnacle Geese was found at 89 sites scattered throughout Britain (fig. 1). The largest flock (180 at Seaview Marsh on the Isle of Wight) is privately owned, and there were an additional 241 free-flying individuals in WWT collections at Slimbridge (174), Arundel (44), Washington (20) and Martin Mere (3). The county with the highest number was Gloucestershire (217), where the species was found at six sites. The second highest county total was in Cumbria, where 123 Barnacle Geese were counted at six sites. Hampshire held the third highest county total with 97 at seven sites, the principal one being Stratfield Saye (78). A majority of sites held small numbers, however: singles were present at 35 sites (39% of those holding the species) and a further 19 sites (21%) were occupied by just two individuals. The average number per site was 10.4, just over half that for the Egyptian Goose (19.2 per site).

Most individuals (97%) were aged, and of these 9% were juveniles. If the privately owned flocks, which are normally prevented from breeding, are excluded from the totals, the proportion of juveniles rises to 17%. Mean brood size was 2.9, with 57 of the 83 juveniles counted occurring in 20 broods.

Successful breeding occurred at 15 sites, the most productive of which was Burlington Fish-farm in Cumbria, where, out of a total of 58 individuals, 18 were juveniles. Stratfield Saye produced the second-highest count of juveniles (15 in five broods) and York University Lake the third (ten in three broods). Elsewhere, Barnacle Geese bred successfully at one further site in each of Cumbria, Hampshire and Yorkshire, at two sites in Essex, two in Sussex, two in Gloucestershire, and at single sites in Bedfordshire, Berkshire and Lancashire.

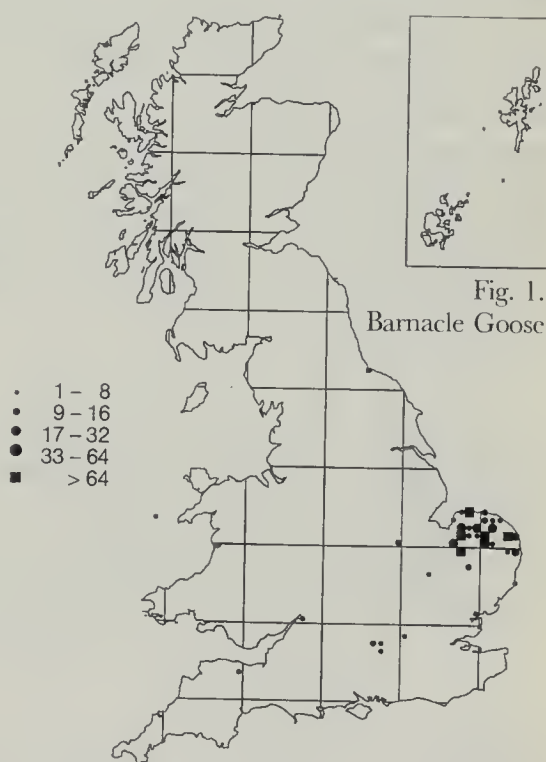


Fig. 1.
Barnacle Goose

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Altogether, 906 Egyptian Geese were found, at 47 sites. Fig. 2 illustrates their distribution and their abundance in each 10-km square. Norfolk held 91% of the national population, with 20 individuals in the Waveney Valley (on the border with Suffolk) and a total of 26 at five other sites within Suffolk. Elsewhere, small numbers were found at sites in Cleveland, Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire, Berkshire, Greater London, Hampshire, Gloucestershire and Somerset.

Most of those counted were aged (95%), and of these 23% were juveniles, 80% of which were in discernible broods. The mean brood size was 3.9, calculated from 157 young in 40 broods at 23 sites. The site which produced the most young was the River Bure Broads system (31 juveniles

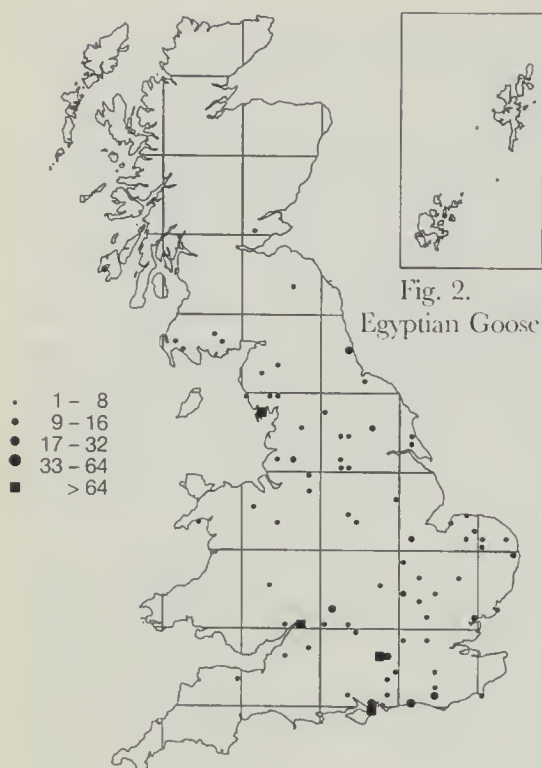


Fig. 2.
Egyptian Goose

Suffolk. The present survey found this species moulting at more than twice as many sites in Norfolk and Suffolk as in 1988, and the apparent population increase of 127% in three years can probably be partly explained by an improvement in coverage.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

Altogether, 182 Snow Geese were found at 27 sites, and their distribution and abundance are shown in fig. 3. The well-established population on the Isle of Mull at Haunn comprised 40 individuals, of which six were blue morphs of the smaller, nominate race. There was a flock of 32 at Linch Hill Leisure Park (Oxfordshire), and the Slimbridge flock of the larger race *atlanticus* (which has since been grounded) numbered 22 adults. The only other record concerning *atlanticus* came from Orkney, where there were six at Tankerness. In Norfolk, there was a flock of 23 *caerulescens* on the Babingley River and two at Gougham Lodge.

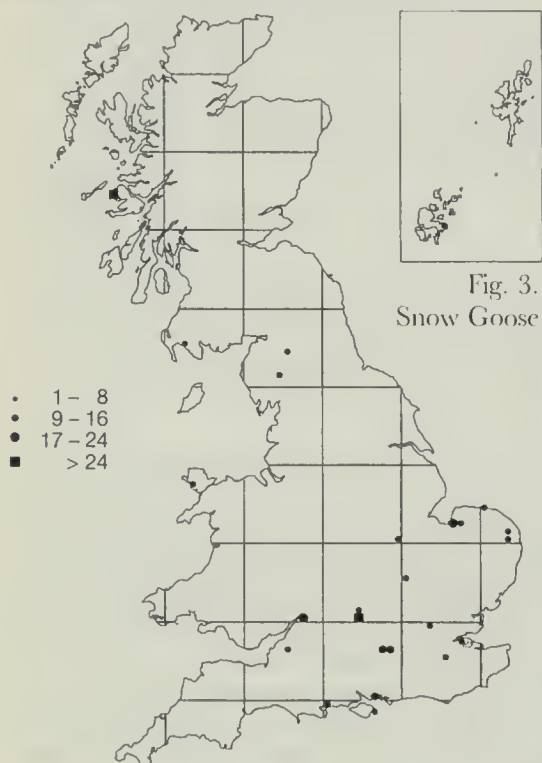


Fig. 3.
Snow Goose

out of 91 individuals counted), and Narford Lake (25 out of 45 counted) was also very productive of juveniles. Other Norfolk sites producing double-figure totals of juveniles were Hillington + Gravel-pit, Blickling Park, Kimberley Park, Westacre, Sparham/Lyng Eastburgh and Holkham Park, the last of which was the best site for the species, with 121 counted (but only 11 juveniles). Successful breeding occurred at a further 13 sites in Norfolk, but, away from that county, young were found only at Rutland Water (Leicestershire), where a pair reared seven juveniles, and on the Thames at Lower Basildon (Berkshire), where three juveniles were present with seven adults, which may well have originated from the nearby Childe Beale Wildlife Park.

Sutherland & Allport (1991) reviewed the status and distribution of the Egyptian Goose in Britain. They estimated the population in the spring of 1988 to be about 400 individuals, and showed distribution during the moult to be restricted to 15 sites in Norfolk and one in

As well as those on Mull, there were two blue morphs at Chew Valley Lake (Avon), two at Bembridge Marsh (Isle of Wight) and singles at Pymmes Park (Greater London), the River Bure Broad System (Norfolk) and Cliffe Quarries (Kent).

Elsewhere, three of unspecified race were seen at Rutland Water (Leicestershire), three at Radwell Gravel-pit (Bedfordshire), two at Abbot Moss and at Haweswater (Cumbria), and singles at Llyn Traffwll (Anglesey), Poole Park (Dorset), Castle Loch, Kirkcowan (Dumfries & Galloway), Sevenoaks Wildfowl Refuge (Kent), Cley Marsh (Norfolk), Rockland Broad (Norfolk) and Blenheim Park Lakes (Oxfordshire).

A flock of 11 adult Snow Geese was seen with one juvenile at Stratfield Saye (Hampshire) on 30th June, nearby at Eversley Gravel-pits (Berkshire) on 6th July, and at Ballins Pond (Hampshire) on 9th July. The juvenile was missing from the latter two

sightings, but it seems plausible that the same individuals were involved, and that the total should be reduced to 160.

Snow Geese bred at four sites, with Haunn (Mull) being the most productive: 14 out of 40 individuals there were juveniles. Elsewhere, there were four juveniles in the Babingley River flock, and singles at Stratfield Saye and Radwell Gravel-pit. Altogether, 93% of the population were aged, and, of these, 12% were juveniles. If those at Slimbridge, which are prevented from breeding, are excluded from the total, the proportion of juveniles rises to 16%, and, if the three records of 11 adults in Hampshire/Berkshire were indeed duplicates, it rises to 19%.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

A total of 88 Pink-footed Geese was found at 29 sites (fig. 4). The pattern of distribution was similar to that observed in winter, when more than 200,000 from the Icelandic population were found in Britain, principally in eastern and southern Scotland, in Lancashire and in Norfolk. It seems likely that some of the Pink-footed Geese recorded during the survey were individuals which had failed to undertake a return migration owing to injury or disease.

In Scotland, Pink-footed Geese were recorded at two sites in Dumfries & Galloway: seven were found by the Nith at Gleneagle, and there were a further four at Castle Loch, Kirkeowan. There were 11 in Tayside, with eight at Loeh Leven, two at Loeh Freuchie and a single at the Pond of Drummond. Two were also found on Shapinsay in Orkney.

In Lancashire, there were 16 Pink-footed Geese at Searisbriek Hall Pond, including a brood of seven produced by the only breeding pair found during the survey. Six at Martin Mere and three at Stocks Reservoir completed the Lancashire total. Elsewhere in northwest England, there were two at Esthwaite and one at Leese Tarn (Cumbria), and one at Chorlton Water Park (Greater Manchester). In Yorkshire, Bolton-on-Swale Gravel-pits held three, and there were singles at Allerton Park Lakes, at Pugneys Country Park and at Hornsea Mere in North Humberside.

In Norfolk, 16 Pink-footed Geese were recorded at six sites. There were eight on the River Bure Broads System, three at Stradsett Lake, two on the Babingley River and singles at Gunton Park, Holkham Park and Sennowe Park. Other sites in eastern England where Pink-footed Geese were seen were Attenborough Gravel-pits (two) and Hoveringham and Bleasby Gravel-pits (one) in Nottinghamshire, with further singles at Fort Henry Ponds (Leicestershire), Fen Drayton Gravel-pits (Cambridgeshire) and Bewl Water (Sussex). There were also six associated with the collection at Donnington Brewery (Gloucestershire) and one at Llyn Traffwl (Anglesey).

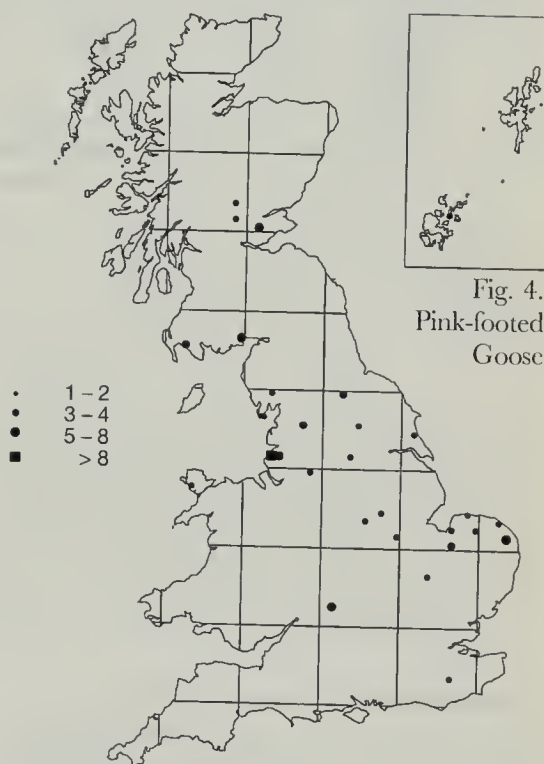


Fig. 4.
Pink-footed
Goose

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

A total of 85 Bar-headed Geese was recorded during the survey. Fig. 5 illustrates their distribution and their abundance within each 10-km square. Stratfield Saye (Hampshire) was the most important site, and was the only place where the species bred successfully: a flock of 19 included nine juveniles in three broods. Highfield Lake (South Yorkshire) held 11, and flocks of six were present at Abberton Reservoir (Essex), The Otter Trust, Bungay (Suffolk), and Castle Loch (Dumfries & Galloway). Other Scottish records comprised two at South Ronaldsay (Orkney), two at Loeh Tummel (Tayside) and one at Tynninghame (Lothian), and in Northern England there were two at Doddington Pool (Cheshire) and singles at Killington Reservoir (Cumbria), Chorlton Water Park (Greater Manchester), Broomhill Flash and Wombwell Ings (South Yorkshire) and Cloverley (Shropshire).

In Eastern England, Norfolk was the most important county, with three at Rockland Broad, three on the River Bure Broads System, and singles at Bayfield Park, Narford Lake and

Snettisham. Elsewhere, there were two at Langford Pits (Bedfordshire), two at Dulwich Park Lake (Greater London) and single birds at Hamford Water (Essex) and Sevenoaks Wildfowl Refuge (Kent).

Farther west, Oxfordshire held three lone Bar-headed Geese, at Farnoor Reservoir, Linch Hill Leisure Park and Medley Brook, and there was one at Woolwich Green (Berkshire). Newtown Marsh (Isle of Wight) and Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) each held two birds of unknown origin, and there was one at Aztec West (Avon).

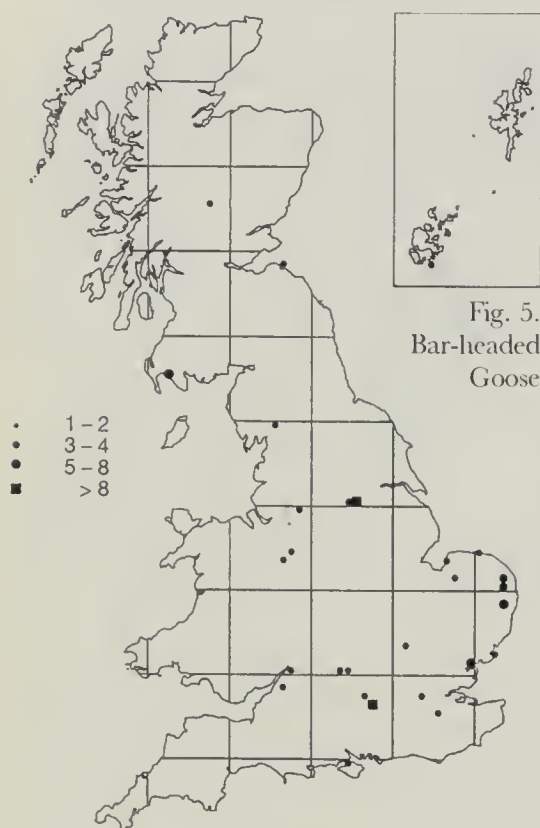


Fig. 5.
Bar-headed
Goose

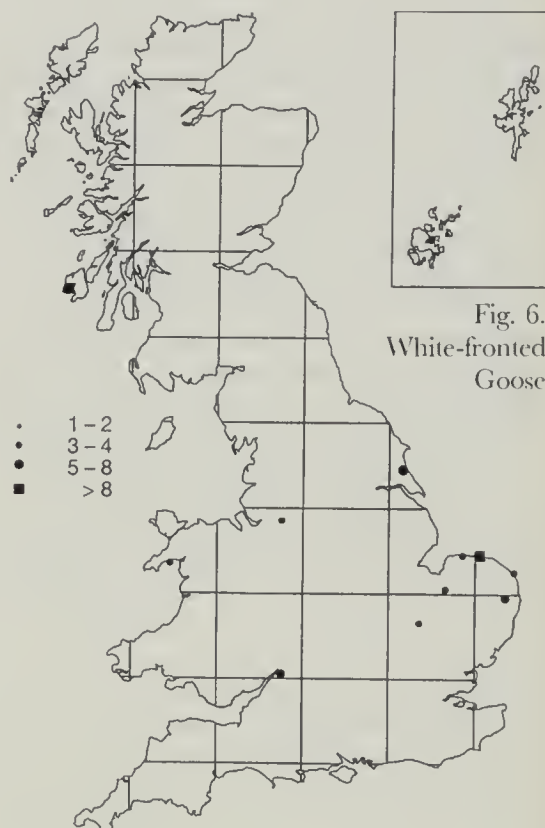


Fig. 6.
White-fronted
Goose

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Of 77 White-fronted Geese found during the survey, 40 were in Norfolk at six sites (fig. 6). These were at Blakeney Fresh Marsh (26), Bayfield Park (four), Holkham Park (two) Stradsett Lake (two), Thurne Broads (two) and Hardley Flood, where the presence of three juveniles with an adult indicated that the species had bred nearby. White-fronted Geese bred at one other site, the Rhinns of Islay (Argyll), where 20 adults and three juveniles of the Greenland race *flavirostris* were recorded. In Orkney, there was one at Balfour Mains.

The remaining records of White-fronted Goose comprised seven adults at Hornsea Mere (North Humberside), three (two of the nominate Eurasian race and one of the Greenland race, all of unknown origin) at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), and singles at Marsh Lane Gravel-pits (Cambridgeshire), Dunham Park (Cheshire) and Starcoast (Gwynedd).

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

A full-winged flock of 30 Bean Geese of the nominate Western race is kept at The Otter Trust, near Bungay, Suffolk. Singles were seen at Hamford Water (Essex) and Stradsett Lake (Norfolk).

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*

Of 29 Lesser White-fronted Geese found during the survey, 24 were in East Anglia. The principal site is at The Otter Trust near Bungay, Suffolk, where a flock of 15 full-winged individuals is kept. There were also four at Lackford Wildfowl Reserve (Suffolk), two on the River Bure Broads System, and singles at Ditchington Park, Postwick Marsh and Sparham/Lyng Eastburgh, all in Norfolk. Elsewhere, there were singles at two Gloucestershire sites (Donnington Brewery and Folly Farm, perhaps the same individual), one in Kent (Bough Beech Reservoir), one in Clwyd (Llyn Gweryd) and one in Cumbria (Burlington Fish Farm).

Emperor Goose *Anser canagica*

Altogether, 14 Emperor Geese were found during the survey. There were five at Stocks Reservoir (Lancashire), three at Llyn Gweryd (Clwyd), two at Castle Lake (Kent), one at Ellesmere (Shropshire), and singles at three sites in Oxfordshire: Blenheim Park Lakes, Linch Hill Leisure Park and Standlake Gravel-pits.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

Five which summered were probably of wild origin: three at Hamford Water (Essex) and two at Newtown Marsh (Isle of Wight). Singles of unknown origin were at Sandbach Flashes (Cheshire), Donnington Brewery (Gloucestershire), Hardwick Gravel-pits (Oxfordshire) and Medley Brook (Oxfordshire).

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*

There were singles at five sites in Norfolk: Congham Lodge, Coston Trent Lakes, the River Bure Broads System, Stradsett Lake and Titchwell; and three at Shalfleet, Isle of Wight. The domesticated form is known as 'Chinese Goose'.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

There were three records of singles, at Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire), at Hinchbrooke Park (Cambridgeshire) and at King's Bromley (Staffordshire).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

One was seen at Snettisham (Norfolk), while a second on the Beaulieu Estuary (Hampshire) is known to have escaped from a collection nearby at Buekler's Hard.

Hybrids

By far the commonest type of hybrid recorded during the survey was between the most numerous two species, despite their belonging to different genera. A total of 262 Canada × Greylag Geese was found at 88 sites scattered throughout the ranges of both species (fig. 7). Sandall Park (South Yorkshire) held the highest concentration, a flock of 43 including four juveniles representing 16% of all those found. There were 16 adult Canada × Greylag Geese at Wet Sleddale Reservoir (Cumbria) and 12 on the River Ouse (Bedfordshire). Flocks of eight were present at Tattershall Gravel-pits (Lincolnshire) and Thrapston Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire), where five were juveniles. There were seven at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) and two adults with five juveniles at Gosforth Park (Tyne & Wear). Three sites held six individuals: Abberton and Ardeigh Reservoirs (Essex) and Tyrham Hall (South Yorkshire), where four were juveniles. Between three and five Canada × Greylag Geese were found at 20 further sites, and there were juveniles at ten of these. The remainder of the population was thinly distributed, with singles recorded at 49 sites, 56% of those holding examples of this hybrid.

There was a wide variety of other hybrids (table 1), but numbers were low. It seems that escaped or introduced geese will breed freely with almost any available species, sometimes producing fertile hybrids (e.g. a Canada bred with a Greylag × 'Chinese' in Avon and produced five juveniles). After Canada × Greylag Goose, the two most common types of hybrid were between the most numerous two species (Canada and Greylag Geese) and the commonest other species in the same genus (Barnacle and White-fronted Geese respectively): there were 13 Canada × Barnacle Geese at nine sites, and 13 Greylag × White-fronted Geese at six sites.

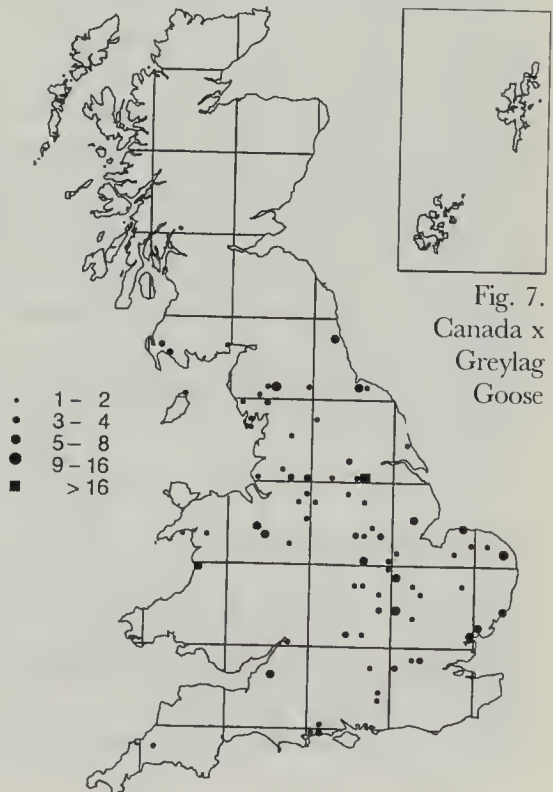


Fig. 7.
Canada x
Greylag
Goose

Discussion

Future numbers

Introduced geese in Britain are considered by some to be an attractive and harmless addition to the avifauna, but many species appear to be increasing in number and this may give cause for concern. The perceived problems associated with the increasing Canada Goose population are now so serious that a Government working group, with representatives from all interested parties, was convened by the Department of the Environment late in 1992 with the purpose of identifying research needs and co-ordinating policy on the species. The scheme of reintroduction of the Greylag Goose organised by wildfowling interests can claim to have been successful: the species is now widespread and increasing, and the population has reached the same level as that of the Canada Goose 15 years ago.

The well-established population of the Egyptian Goose is still quite small and probably stable, but the Barnacle Goose, which has a similar population if captive full-winged individuals are included, may be consolidating its numbers and distribution. The situation should be monitored closely in the light of exponential increase in the recently established population of Barnacle Geese (albeit natural in this case) on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea (Larsson *et al.* 1988). Although one season's data are no basis for predicting future numbers, the proportion of juveniles suggests that the Barnacle Goose population could be self-sustaining or capable of increase, although the species bred successfully at rather few sites in 1991, and average brood size was smaller than for the commoner species. One other species, the Snow Goose, also had a relatively high proportion of juveniles in the population, but most were produced at just one site, and Snow Geese failed to breed successfully over most of their British range in 1991. Small numbers of Snow Geese have been found on the Yorkshire Moors in the summer (M. Garnett *in litt.*) and it is suspected that they may breed there, and perhaps in other remote areas.

Three species with rather similar population sizes—Pink-footed, Bar-headed and White-fronted Geese—each bred at one or two sites and may have the potential for consolidation and expansion of their numbers. Lesser White-fronted and Swan Geese both hybridised with more-numerous species, indicating that they could start breeding in the wild in future. No other species found during the survey bred successfully, and the number and variety of hybrids found attest to the difficulty that many escaped or introduced exotics have in finding a mate of the same species or form. With this being the case, many species can be expected to die out in the wild if further escapes from captivity can be prevented.

Conservation implications

Given the problems associated with the explosion of the Canada Goose population in Britain (Owen *et al.* in press) and Scandinavia (Madsen & Andersson 1990) and the example of the threat posed by North American Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* to the endangered population of the White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala* in Spain (Hughes & Grussu in press), it is essential to ensure that other non-native breeding species are not allowed the

opportunity to expand out of control. By the time species such as the Canada Goose or the Ruddy Duck become a problem, it is often too late to control them without disproportionate effort, expense and controversy. Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was designed to prevent circumstances such as the threat currently posed to White-headed Ducks by introduced Ruddy Ducks: '... if any person releases or allows to escape into the wild any animal which is of a kind which is not ordinarily resident in and is not a regular visitor to Great Britain in a wild state ... he shall be guilty of an offence.' Careless management of many collections has meant that we now have a bizarre array of exotic geese on the loose in Britain. It is illegal for wildfowl collections to keep unpinioned exotics, although their grounds often attract wandering escapees of unknown origin whose legal status is equivocal. Perhaps it is time that the law was more strictly enforced, and the law on the keeping of unpinioned 'resident' and 'regular visitor' species was reviewed?

Acknowledgments

The survey would have been impossible without the dedicated efforts of many hundreds of volunteer counters. I also wish especially to thank the 80 Regional Organisers, who gave freely of their time to co-ordinate the fieldwork.

The following took the time and trouble to comment on the original survey proposals: Mark Fletcher, Tony Fox, Stuart Hughes, Sacha Haywood, Jeff Kirby, Kate Lessells, Errol Newman, Malcolm Ogilvie, David Parkin, Tony Prater, Paul Shimmings, Ron Terry and John Wyatt. Thanks also to Jeff Kirby and David Stroud, whose comments improved an earlier draft of this paper. Figs. 1-7 were produced using Dmap, written by Dr Alan Morton.

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Brown Shrike in Shetland: new to Britain and Ireland



R. A. Hume, on behalf of the British Birds Rarities Committee

A Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* was present at Grutness, Sumburgh, Shetland, from 30th September to 2nd October 1985. It was discovered and identified by M. S. Chapman. This short paper is based upon his original account, submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee.

During fine, calm weather (except for occasional light showers) on 30th September 1985, MSC was checking the garden at Grutness, Sumburgh. As he walked towards a small patch bordered by roses, a shrike *Lanius* flew away around a corner. Brief views showed an apparently adult shrike with a dull rufescent tail.

It next flew onto a concrete post, where clear views revealed a black face mask and bill, and a very prominent pale supercilium. It flew down, showing no wing bar, and perched briefly before disappearing into a small sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. MSC realised that it was almost certainly a Brown Shrike, appearing almost identical to a bird which he had seen at Kergord, Shetland, in 1981*.

*This earlier bird was also found by MSC and originally submitted as an Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus*. It was not accepted as Isabelline and was considered probably to be Brown, but its identity was not regarded as wholly proven.



224 & 225. Adult Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Shetland, October 1985 (Dennis Coultts)



226. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Beidaihe, China, May 1992 (David Tipling)



Further brief views revealed the characteristic pattern of warm brown upperparts, brighter orange-rufescent rump and contrasting dull, rufescent tail, with contrasting pale underparts and a very striking, masked face which showed that it was indeed a Brown Shrike.

MSC telephoned several people, including Fair Isle Bird Observatory, and went in search of A. F. T. Fitchett and G. J. Fitchett, whom he had met earlier [‘to his eternal credit, he hired a taxi to come to look for us’: GJF]. By dusk, excellent views had been obtained by about 12 observers, including J. D. Okill, P. Ellis, J. Eames and R. J. Johns (although GJF mentions an agonising hour-long search with the weather deteriorating to driving rain, followed by good views later). By 2nd October, the shrike had been seen by about 80 observers, photographed by Dennis Coutts (plates 224 & 225) and drawn by GJF (fig. 1 on page 604).

Description

Very smart adult shrike, about size of Red-backed *L. collurio*. Upperparts rich, warm brown. Crown warmer, reddish-brown, merging evenly into mantle, fading towards nape (mantle medium brown: GJF). Rump bright orange-rufescent, contrasting markedly with mantle and tail (formed clear oblong between mantle and tail: GJF). Lower rump merged into uppertail-coverts, duller rufescent-brown, similar to tail, which was dull but distinctly rufous-brown, brightest at base and slightly darker at tip (extreme tip buff: GJF).

Wings rich, dark brown, edged conspicuously pale on tertials, with broad, pale edges washed pale rufous-buff at base, creamy-white at tips. Rest of wing, including coverts,

uniform, with no pale edges. Wings as a whole contrastingly darker and colder brown than rest of upperparts, though contrast not marked (primaries/secondaries forming dark panel: GJF). No trace of any pale patch on the primaries.

Striking facial pattern. Black mask (lores and ear-coverts), white forehead (very narrow: GJF) and broad pale supercilium, broadening and flaring slightly behind eye (white, washed grey along upper border). Dark bill reinforced contrasted effect.

Throat white; rest of underparts sandy-buff with faint buff speckling on upper flanks.

Bill black except for small, greyer area at base, visible only at close range. Legs blackish.

The bird looked distinctively large-headed and heavy-billed, the bill heavier than on Isabelline, with a longer, more prominent hook and a longer, more bulging lower mandible.

The tail appeared long and slim, almost disproportionately narrow from the side. In a rear view, the individual feathers looked narrow; tip rounded. On 1st October, MSC paid special attention to the tail and noted the outer two pairs of tail feathers as distinctly shorter than the rest (by an estimated 25 mm) and paler, sandier brown.

Identification

Distinguished from *L. i. phoenicuroides* by:

- (1) Combination of solid black face mask and complete lack of white wing bar
- (2) Basically warm mantle colour
- (3) Strong contrast between bright orange-rufescent rump and duller (but still rufous) tail
- (4) White forehead (black on male *phoenicuroides*)
- (5) Underparts washed sandy-buff, not pinkish-buff
- (6) Very bold, distinctly large-headed structure
- (7) Large bill with prominent hook (overlaps on skins, but on this bird particularly striking)
- (8) Long, slim, rounded tail

Weather and associated birds

The weather maps for the few days prior to 30th show a large high-pressure system over the Baltic, with a smaller one approaching from the north on 27th September, giving easterly winds on that date. As they joined, and moved south, the winds swung to give a very warm southerly airstream over Shetland on 29th, followed by lighter, variable winds (easterly in Lerwick, SSW in Sumburgh) and intermittent slight drizzle on 30th.

There was an arrival of birds in Shetland on 27th/28th September, with small numbers of Continental migrants and several Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* of one of the eastern races and, on Fair Isle, three Pechora Pipits *Anthus gustavi* and a Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* prior to 28th. On 30th, birds were seen arriving at Grutness, with Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Yellow-browed Warbler, Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita*, Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* and a Barred Warbler *S. nisoria* around the small garden.

Distribution

Brown Shrikes of the nominate race breed from the eastern parts of Western Siberia and the Russian Altai eastward to Kamchatka, and south to the central Altai and northern Mongolia. They migrate through Mongolia and China to winter in Southeast China, Southeast Asia, Borneo, the Philippines and India, west to the Punjab.

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British Birds gives finders of birds new to Britain every opportunity to write accounts of their records. The efforts made to contact the finder of the Brown Shrike, Mark Chapman, were unsuccessful, however, so a member of the Rarities Committee, Rob Hume, was invited to compile the above account, on Mark Chapman's behalf, from the original record submission. It is intended that members of the Rarities Committee will be invited to write accounts of records of additions to the British and Irish List only in the rare cases when the finders and identifiers of the birds are untraceable or whenever repeated promises to supply texts for publication are not fulfilled.

Peter Lansdown (Chairman, British Birds Rarities Committee) and Dr Alan Knox (Chairman, British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee) have commented as follows: 'A single circulation of the record to each committee was sufficient for the identification to be accepted unanimously. The BOURC members, in their deliberations regarding the bird's origin, took into consideration the breeding range of Brown Shrike, which coincides broadly with that of a number of species which occur regularly in Britain and Ireland, the species' normal long-distance migration, the date of occurrence and the simultaneous arrival of several other eastern species in the Northern Isles. Furthermore, it was discovered that the escape likelihood was extremely low, with no imports of the species into Britain since prior to 1927. The BOURC voted unanimously for natural occurrence (*Brit. Birds* 81: 586; *Ibis* 133: 219), as a result of which Brown Shrike was placed in Category A of the British and Irish List.' EDS



Fig. 1. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Shetland, September-October 1985 (G. J. Fitchett)



Inclusion of plates 224-226 and fig. 1 in colour has been subsidised by Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd, the sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee

Review of status and categorisation of feral birds on the British List



*Keith Vinicombe, John Marchant and Alan Knox,
on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee*

The principal task of the BOU Records Committee is to maintain the list of species and subspecies which have occurred in Britain and Ireland. This work involves not only the assessment of records of birds potentially new to Britain, but also monitoring the status of all species to ensure that categorisations remain appropriate. Categorisation was introduced in 1971 to indicate those species for which there were no recent records (category B) and those whose breeding populations had originally been introduced, accidentally or on purpose, by man (category C). Species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state at least once since 1st January 1958 are placed in category A, which forms the bulk of the British and Irish List (BOU 1971, 1992a).

Categorisation has brought its own difficulties in that the allocation of species to one category or another sometimes relies on fragmentary evidence and may depend on the subjective views of Committee members. For some species, more than one category is appropriate.

One group which presents problems of categorisation comprises those species which occur feral. In the fifth and sixth editions of the BOU's checklist of the birds of Britain and Ireland (BOU 1971, 1992b), four species were judged to have fallen into two categories and were given dual status. Three of these (Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser* and Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*) were categorised AC because both wild and introduced birds occur or form the basis of our breeding populations. Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* was categorised BC because the current introduced population replaced a wild one which died out in the eighteenth century.

This paper discusses the results of a review by the BOURC of the status and categorisation of feral species in Britain (BOU 1993). The origins of the

review lay in Committee discussions of the sixth checklist (BOU 1992b), fuelled by new information particularly from two important surveys: the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's 'Introduced Goose Survey' (IGS) in the summer of 1991 (Delany 1993) and the British Trust for Ornithology's *New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993, referred to below as the *1988-91 Atlas*). The review has led to the dualling of categories for several further species, to indicate either AC or AD4 status, and the addition of others for the first time to category D4. The latter, a subgroup of category D, consists of species that would otherwise appear in Category C except that their feral populations may or may not be self-supporting. Category D4, like the rest of category D, is very much a 'wait-and-see' holding category and does not form part of the main British and Irish List.

During the course of the review, the Committee considered what constituted a viable self-supporting feral population, fulfilling the qualification for category C. It was agreed that rigid rules should not be applied. There was clearly a difference between, for example, one concentrated breeding population of 900 Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiacus* in East Anglia and a widely scattered population of 900 Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* with sporadic and isolated breeding attempts. Also, the required population size would be different for different species: 160 scattered Snow Geese *Anser caerulescens* may not be self-sustaining, whereas 20 pairs of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Scotland could be. The populations of many feral species are dynamic: most of the scarcer ones can be expected to increase and perhaps qualify for higher categories in future years.

In several cases, recategorisation arose from neither a change in status nor new information, but from new views within the Committee about how the categories should be implemented. For example, there have been no changes for decades in the status of feral Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* and Rock Doves *Columba livia* in Britain. Rather, it is the opinion of the Committee that these and other substantial feral populations deserve recognition and should not be ignored in faunal listings, whether at national or local levels.

Species recategorised

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

The IGS (Delany 1993) found 88 at 29 sites. Some of these may have been non-returning winter visitors. One pair in Lancashire had seven young. The *1988-91 Atlas* recorded breeding in two 10-km squares and summering in an additional 11. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel recorded two summer records in the UK in 1990 (Spencer *et al.* 1993). Clearly, this is a species not yet established and not qualifying for category C, but the Committee decided that it marginally justified dual AD1 status to encourage further monitoring.

Snow Goose *A. caerulescens*

The IGS found 182 Snow Geese at 27 sites and at least 12% of those aged were juveniles. Since that survey, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust has grounded 22 free-flying Snow Geese at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire (Dr M. Owen *in litt.*). In 1992, the British feral population was estimated at 252, with 60 on Mull and Coll, Strathclyde (Evans 1993a).

Feral breeding has been reported in a number of places and the population may be self-sustaining (S. Delany *in litt.*, Dr M. A. Ogilvie *in litt.*). The *1988-91 Atlas*, however, recorded breeding in only one square and summering in a further ten.

The Committee considered that the population may at present be too widely scattered to be

regarded as fully self-sustaining, and the species was given dual AD4 rather than AC status. As with other category assignments, this will be reviewed from time to time.

Bar-headed Goose *A. indicus*

The IGS discovered 85, the highest counts being of 19 (nine young) at Stratfield Saye in Hampshire and 11 at Highfield Lake, South Yorkshire. The 1988-91 *Atlas* records breeding in one square and summering in three more. A pair produced two young in Greater Manchester in 1992 (Mrs A. J. Smith *in litt.*). Clearly, the species is not established, but numbers are likely to increase, so the species was added to category D4 to encourage monitoring.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

The IGS found a total of 925 summering at 89 sites scattered throughout Britain. The largest flock was of 180 privately owned individuals at Seaview Marsh, Isle of Wight. Of those aged, 9% were juveniles, but, if the privately owned flocks are excluded (see below), this figure rises to 17%. Breeding was noted at 15 sites. This figure of 925 is on a par with the 906 Egyptian Geese found, and that species has, of course, been in category C since 1971. Barnacle Goose, however, differs in that the population is more widely scattered and 238 were based on three Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust reserves, at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, Washington, Co. Durham, and Arundel, West Sussex. If these and the Isle of Wight flock are taken out of the total, then the 'feral' population becomes 507. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust is actively diminishing its stocks of Barnacle Geese by reducing their breeding success, in some years to nil (Dr M. Owen *in litt.*).

The 1988-91 *Atlas* found breeding Barnacle Geese in 17 10-km squares from Hampshire to Northern Ireland and Jura, Strathclyde, in comparison with just two squares in the 1968-72 *Atlas* (Sharrock 1976). The 1988-91 *Atlas* notes that this species is 'probably still too scattered for there to be a self-sustaining feral population. If the current increase in breeding records continues, however, there seems to be no reason to doubt that such a population could become established.' It is also considered that the 1988-91 *Atlas* map under-represents the range in Britain. Simon Delany (*in litt.*) considers that the Barnacle Goose population is now probably 'viable and self-supporting'.

Clearly, the species is at least borderline. The Committee decided to exercise caution and considered that the population may currently be too scattered to warrant dual category AC status, but there can be little doubt that, unless control measures are taken, the population will continue to increase and it will not be long before AC status may be justified. The species is, therefore, given dual AD4 status, but the position will be reviewed periodically.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

A feral population of Muscovy Ducks has been present on the River Ouse at Ely, Cambridgeshire, since the early 1980s (1988-91 *Atlas*). Broods were first noticed in 1987, and in November 1991 the population was estimated at approximately 130 individuals, of which about 60% were that year's juveniles. The 1988-91 *Atlas* recorded breeding in four 10-km squares in Britain and summering in one other. The Committee considered that the Cambridgeshire population is too recent to be added to category C, but this species obviously should be monitored. The species was therefore added to category D4.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Fox (1988) confirmed that 'there is no doubt that the present Gadwall breeding population in Britain derives largely from introduced stock'. The breeding population has been estimated at 770 pairs in Britain and 30 in Ireland (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). The winter population reached 7,700 in 1991/92 (Cranswick *et al.* 1992). In view of the size of this population, dual AC status is clearly overdue.

Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*

The 1971 BOU checklist acknowledged that 'artificial rearing and re-stocking is widely practised' (BOU 1971). Aside from the wild-type birds which are introduced annually for shooting purposes, domesticated forms of the species are abundant feral breeders, particularly in amenity parks and on other waters close to human habitation. This species has also been given dual AC status.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Isolated breeding occurred in Lincolnshire in 1937, in Essex in 1968 and, since 1968, one or two pairs have nested in Britain in most years, chiefly in southern England (Baatsen 1990). There is, however, a significant feral population of unknown origin at the Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, which has been established for some years.

The Red-crested Pochard was first recorded at the Cotswold Water Park in January 1960, but became much more frequent during the 1970s. The first breeding occurred in 1975 (Mardle & Ogilvie 1976). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the number of breeding attempts seems to have been limited by a shortage of females, but, by 1990, there were as many as ten cases. Breeding success has also been affected by pike *Esox lucius* (Baatsen 1990). Details extracted from the *Gloucestershire Bird Reports* (1975-91) and from Evans (1993a) are given in table 1. Baatsen believes that the population has become self-sustaining and should continue to increase exponentially.

Table 1. Number of Red-crested Pochards *Netta rufina* at the Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, 1975-92

Year	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92
Maximum counts	6	7	11	13	15	14	13	16	11	24	18	17	22	25	35	26	34	45
No. of broods	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	?	1	3	2	0	2	5

In the 1986 *Gloucestershire Bird Report* it is mentioned that a small, resident, free-flying population of about 15 individuals occurs in and around the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust grounds at Slimbridge. Dr M. Owen (*in litt.*) believes that these birds did not originate from Slimbridge. The collection attracts feral wildfowl from elsewhere and there have been no escapes of this species from Slimbridge for at least ten years. In addition, the species appeared at Bourton Pits, Gloucestershire, in 1974, with single broods in 1976 and 1981. Numbers there reached 12 in November 1981, but few have occurred since. The species also nested at Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, in several years during 1964-78, but fledging success was poor, probably because of predation by pike (Mardle & Ogilvie 1976).

This is another species that needs monitoring, but the Committee considers that the feral population is not yet large enough to warrant dual AC status. The species has been given dual AD4 categorisation.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

The reintroduction programme in western Scotland is showing clear signs of being successful. Totals of 39 males and 43 females were released on Rhum during 1975-85. Successful breeding began in 1985 and, by 1990, 15 young had been raised (Pienkowski & Love 1991). Although only two young were reared in 1990, these were from nine separate breeding attempts (Spencer *et al.* 1993). Four pairs raised seven young in 1991 (*Birds Magazine* Winter 1991) and seven pairs laid eggs in 1992, resulting in four pairs rearing seven young, two of which are known to have died during the following winter (C. Crooke verbally). The Committee considers that this species is not yet firmly established, but the situation will be monitored. The species has been given dual AD4 status.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Marquiss & Newton (1982) stated that 'Goshawks currently breeding in Britain are apparently not derived from Continental immigrants, but rather from birds which have escaped from falconers or been deliberately introduced.' According to Spencer *et al.* (1993), the current British Northern Goshawk population is probably about 200-300 pairs. The population is believed to be self-sustaining and the species has been afforded dual AC status.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

This species is currently being reintroduced into Scotland and England (Pienkowski & Evans 1991). A total of 122 was released during 1989-92, and nine young were raised in England and one in Scotland in 1992 (Evans & Stowe 1993). Obviously, this reintroduction attempt is still in its early stages, but the position will be monitored from time to time. The species has been given dual AD4 status.

Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar*

Chukars have been released in this country since 1970, although a few escapes from captivity had been seen as early as 1968. An average of 2,700 Chukars per year were released until the early 1980s. They have also been crossed with the Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa* to produce a more productive and easily reared gamebird. These hybrids were also widely released from as early as 1972. Most hybrids seen in the field were released individuals, rather than hybrids produced in the wild (Potts 1989).

The release of non-indigenous species was prohibited by Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, but a general licence was issued in 1984 authorising the continued release of Chukars and Chukar × Red-legged Partridge hybrids. This licence was issued to allow game-farmers a sufficient period of time to phase out the release of both Chukars and their hybrids (Wilkinson 1987). From the end of 1992, it has not been legal to release them.

Chukars and their hybrids are far less successful in the wild than pure Red-legged Partridges. On a farm in Sussex, the latter were producing young (to the age of six weeks) at 4.5 times the rate of Chukars or hybrids (Potts 1989). It is hoped that the revocation of the release licence will lead to the gradual disappearance of the Chukar and its hybrids. In view of the current uncertainty, the Committee decided to place Chukar in category D4 to encourage monitoring.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Earlier this century, Grey Partridges from Russia, Hungary and Poland were released in Britain and interbred with native ones to the extent that the population was considered no longer assignable to any particular race (Meinertzhagen 1952; BOU 1965).

Studies of recent introductions of Grey Partridges have shown that the released birds fare less well in the wild than do native ones, as game-farms have selected birds for many generations, mainly for their egg production. This has reduced their success in the wild, so that released birds have had very little direct impact on the wild population (Dr G. R. Potts *in litt.*). Nevertheless, in view of the fact that releases have been taking place for a considerable length of time and that integration of released and wild birds has occurred, the Committee has decided to assign this species dual AC status. Irish Grey Partridges are considered to be of wild origin (Dr G. R. Potts *in litt.*).

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

The large feral populations of this species on our cliffs and in our cities make this an obvious candidate for joint AC categorisation. It seems surprising that the 'Feral Pigeon' has been for so long ignored as a British bird.* The recognition of individuals that are truly feral is hampered by the regular appearance in the wild of racing pigeons and other dove-cote pigeons living in or newly absconded from semicaptivity.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

From the early 1970s, this species has been the subject of numerous reintroduction attempts. The Department of the Environment (1993) estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 have been released annually in recent years. Non-native races have also been involved. Since 25th November 1992, the Barn Owl has been placed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and, since 1st January 1993, a licence has been required for its release. As a result of poor practices, a large proportion of those released were not surviving and the JNCC takes the view that there is no scientific case for the species' reintroduction (Dr C. A. Galbraith *in litt.*). It is likely that only a small number of well-run schemes have resulted in feral breeding (R. F. Porter *in litt.*) and that unco-ordinated releases will now be reduced. For these reasons, the Committee decided to give the species dual AD4 (rather than AC) status.

Other species considered

The following species were also considered by the Committee, but no change of category was considered necessary.

*It was not ignored by the BTO/Irish Wildbird Conservancy atlas projects, being included in both the 1968-72 *Breeding Atlas* (Sharrock 1976) and the 1981/82-1983/84 *Winter Atlas* (Lack 1986). EDS

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

The Committee is aware that semicaptive Night Herons are allowed to fly freely and to nest in a feral state at Edinburgh Zoo and at a site in Norfolk. Those at Edinburgh are believed to belong to the American race *hoactli*. Adults and juveniles from these sites, some unringed, are difficult or impossible to separate from wild birds visiting Britain from abroad (see Rogers *et al.* 1993). There is, however, no indication as yet that a true feral breeding population will develop beyond the present sites. The Committee would welcome information on the feral status of this species.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

The species is at large in small numbers in the feral state (for example, up to three at Blunham, Bedfordshire, since at least 1983, where a pair hatched but failed to rear young in 1993) and it occasionally breeds in Scotland in an apparently wild state. Between 1979 and 1992, up to two feral pairs have nested almost annually in the Endrick Marshes, Loch Lomond, Strathclyde. The swans originated from a local wildfowl collection which closed down. In their ten successful seasons, 34 cygnets hatched, of which 21 fledged, but they appear to have been assimilated into the wild wintering populations (Mitchell 1993). In view of the tenuous nature of this feral population and the possibility that it may not survive the deaths of the remaining escaped adults, the Committee decided not to give the species dual ADI categorisation.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

The IGS found 77, including 10 in Norfolk and 23 of the Greenland race *flavirostris* (including three juveniles) on Islay, Strathclyde. On Islay, full-winged feral individuals originate from a small wildfowl collection on the island and two to five pairs have bred every year since at least 1986. It seems likely that the population has not increased because the young are assimilated into the wild wintering population (Dr M. A. Ogilvie *in litt.*). The only evidence of breeding in England was three juveniles at Hardley Flood, Norfolk. Clearly, this is a species that does not have a viable self-supporting population and, in view of the fact that its breeding attempts seem at present to be sporadic and irregular, the Committee decided not to add to its current category A status.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *A. erythropus*

The IGS found 29, including 24 in East Anglia, where a flock of 15 full-winged individuals is kept at The Otter Trust near Bungay, Suffolk. On this basis, there is no real feral population in Britain. There is, however, a complication with this species. Two reintroduction programmes are taking place in Scandinavia, one in Finland and one in Sweden (Paynter 1991). In Finland, groups of young Lesser Whitefronts are being released in Lapland (eight in 1989 and 27 in 1990) and these are being fitted with blue neckbands. One of these, released on 3rd July 1990 (Evans 1992), has been recorded at Slimbridge (and in Dyfed), with the wild White-fronted Geese, in the three winters 1990/91-1992/93. In Sweden, Lesser Whitefronts are being reared under Barnacle Geese. It is hoped that the foster parents will lead the Lesser Whitefronts to set up a new wintering area in the Netherlands. These birds are being colour-ringed. One – a first-winter – occurred in Lancashire in winter 1991/92 and was reported again in Clwyd in June 1993 (Rogers *et al.* 1993). It had been reared under Barnacle Geese at Stockholm Zoo and released in Swedish Lapland in July 1991 (Evans 1992). Released birds have already paired with wild Lesser Whitefronts and produced unringed young. The BOURC feels that it is now impossible to be certain that any Lesser Whitefront in Britain is truly wild. If the Scandinavian reintroduction projects restore the Lesser Whitefront population to a much higher level and it proves to be self-supporting, then consideration will be given to dual AC status on the grounds that Britain is receiving individuals from an introduced population. It is too early to be sure that the programmes will be a success and the Committee decided that the species should be retained in category A, but its status will be reviewed from time to time.

Other geese

Other geese recorded in small numbers on the IGS were Bean Goose *A. fabalis* (32), Emperor Goose *A. cauagica* (11), Brent Goose *B. bernicla* (nine), Swan Goose *A. cygnoides* (eight), Ross's Goose *A. rossii* (three) and Red-breasted Goose *B. ruficollis* (two). The numbers of these and other feral waterfowl were too small to warrant any change in their categorisation or addition to category D1.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

The 1988-91 *Atlas* recorded breeding in one square and summering in four others. The species is observed frequently in Britain, particularly in late summer, but widely ignored on the grounds that all are likely to be of captive origin. But might Britain be receiving Ruddy Shelducks from viable, self-supporting, feral Continental populations? The Committee's understanding of the situation is that, although the species does sometimes breed in the wild in the Netherlands and Germany, the attempts are somewhat sporadic and no populations are fully self-supporting. This is a successful species in captivity, which produces large numbers of young. On the Continent, breeders tend to release excess young at the end of the breeding season, contributing to the late-summer peak of this species in Britain. The Committee decided that, in the absence of information to the contrary, the species should remain in category B.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

The 1968-72 *Atlas* recorded the presence of Wood Ducks in eleven 10-km squares. Breeding was confirmed in nine of these, mostly in Surrey, where up to ten pairs nested regularly on a private estate at Puttenham, near Guildford. The 1988-91 *Atlas* shows six squares with confirmed breeding (four in the Southeast and two in the West Midlands), together with presence in a further 24. The species shows a slight extension of range from the previous stronghold in Surrey and Berkshire into Sussex, Kent and parts of mainly southern East Anglia. Frost (1987) also recorded three breeding records in Derbyshire in 1984-86.

In response to a BOURC request for information which was published in various journals and magazines, the Committee received just seven letters, six of which related to isolated, widely scattered sightings. Evans (1993b) also collected records of the species during 1990-91 and listed a maximum of 57 individuals, with breeding attempts at Tunstall Park, Staffordshire (pair with five young on 30th June 1990), and at Bough Beech Reservoir, Kent (female laid infertile eggs in 1990). Most records came from the Home Counties, southeast England and the Midlands, with some north to Cheshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire. In view of the small numbers at large and the paucity of breeding attempts, there is no justification for upgrading this species from category D4.

Established category C species

The following species are well established and currently in category C, AC or BC. Their status was not reviewed as no changes have taken place to justify recategorisation:

Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Egyptian Goose, Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*, Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Capercaillie, Red-legged Partridge, Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*, Lady Amherst's Pheasant *C. amherstiae*, Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* and Little Owl *Athene noctua*.

Repercussions of creeping naturalisation

The Committee is very troubled about the apparent naturalisation or possible future naturalisation of increasing numbers of species, particularly wildfowl. The consequences of introductions in any country have rarely proved to be beneficial. The Committee believes that the present legislation and the mechanism of its enforcement should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

Since many of the species are so mobile, potential problems are not necessarily confined to the country of origin. Ruddy Ducks probably originating from collections in Britain had by 1992 been recorded in 15 European countries, Morocco and the Ukraine; the winter population is already more than 3,500 and increasing rapidly. The species has recently been the subject of controversy following allegations that it poses a serious threat through competition and hybridisation to all populations of the globally threatened White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*, of which only 19,000 are believed to remain (Hughes &

Grussu in press). A similar situation may be developing with flamingos *Phoenicopterus*: escapes of various taxa are beginning to breed in northwest Europe (Treep 1991) and may present a threat to the Mediterranean population of the Greater Flamingo *P. ruber roseus*.

Under Section 14 (1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to release or allow to escape any animal which is not ordinarily resident in and is not a regular visitor to Great Britain in a wild state or which is included in Part 1 of Schedule 9 of the Act (this is a list of animals which are established in the wild). There is a case for reviewing Schedule 9 in the light of the Committee's work and adding those category C and D+ species not already on the Schedule. The Department of the Environment should also review education and enforcement regarding Section 14, as escapes and introductions are occurring despite the legislation (R. F. Porter & G. Williams *in litt.*).

The need for monitoring

Further monitoring of all the species covered in this paper is considered essential to determine future trends. A scheme to record escapes and feral birds is currently being set up by Mike Rogers under the auspices of the newly formed Association of County Recorders and Editors (ACRE). This will collate data nationally through the recorders' network. The BOURC is represented on the group steering the project. It is hoped that the scheme will lead to better information not only on feral species, but also for determining the patterns of occurrence of *known* escaped birds. The latter will help to inform those making assessments of possible natural vagrants.

The Records Committee urges birdwatchers to submit records of *all* feral and escaped species to their local recorders and urges local-bird-report editors and committees to collect and disseminate this information. Records of category D species and escapes should be published, preferably in an appendix to the main systematic list. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel is requested to consider the nationwide monitoring of the breeding of rare feral and escaped birds. Escaped and feral species have been ignored for too long. Only with such efforts will useful data be gathered to assess their impact on the native avifauna and the countryside.

The Records Committee would be pleased to receive information or copies of publications relating to feral and escaped species for use in future reviews. These may be sent to the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, c/o The Natural History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

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Summary

The British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee has reviewed the categorisation of species on the British List which have developed or have started to develop feral breeding populations. Significant proportions of the breeding populations of Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* and Rock Dove *Columba livia* are derived from introduced or escaped stock, and these five species are now given dual category AC status. The following seven species, as well as occurring in a wild state, are also breeding ferally. Their numbers are such that their feral populations may not be self-supporting. They have been given dual category AD+ status: Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Snow Goose *A. caerulescens*, Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*, Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba*. Three remaining species have been added to category D4: Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*, Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* and Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar*. The Committee also considered a number of other species, but decided that their status should remain unchanged. Careful and systematic monitoring of these species, as well as all other feral and escaped birds, is urged.

The Committee is deeply concerned at the creeping naturalisation of the species involved and recommends an urgent review of the relevant legislation and its enforcement.

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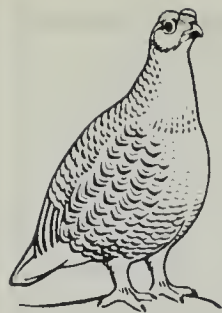


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We apologise for any accidental oversight.



Obituaries

Francis Raymond Smith (1906-1992)

I first met Ray Smith in the mid 1950s. In fact, I nearly fell over him. I was walking an area of the North Cornwall coastline, searching for any sign of a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* during their disastrous population collapse, when I tripped over a pair of legs sticking out of a bracken clump.

A smiling, sun-tanned and embarrassed man, with a pair of ancient binoculars tied around his neck by a piece of cord, apologised and, after he discovered that we shared the same interests, introduced himself as 'F. R. Smith'.

That same day, Ray took me to a beautiful spot near Mawgan Porth and together we peered over the edge of a 90-m cliff on to the breakers below.



227. F. R. Smith, Devon, late 1970s (*Don Tucker*)

From out of a dark fissure on the cliff-face flew my first Cornish Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax*, rising in spirals on the up-currents until they were level with us and then, with half-closed wings, plunging towards the surf with clear ringing calls. It was a day never to be forgotten. Pure magic!

Our paths met again some ten years later, when my work took me to Devon and I joined Ray and the late R. G. Adams on their regular winter weekend bird counts on the Exe estuary. We started, regardless of tides, every Saturday and Sunday at 7 a.m. on-the-dot and if either Dick Adams or I was late at the rendezvous Ray left without us; he was *never* late because he always got out of bed at 4.30 a.m.

I can still clearly picture him being dragged along the sand-dunes on Dawlish Warren by his uncontrollable golden cocker spaniel, named 'Andy', who hated everyone except Ray. Unfortunately, on one of these estuary counts Andy decided to do battle with the Penzance-to-Paddington express train and sadly lost the fight, but he was quickly replaced by an even more eccentric animal of the same breed that refused point blank to allow Ray to get into his own car.

Ray, I believe, was happiest when working in the field on his own and he astonished many people with the number of interesting birds he discovered in the county. His fieldcraft was quite superb for he had the ability to sit quietly for hour upon hour (unlike many birders today) noting every bird and every detail on each species, locating the nest sites – as he often did, accompanied by his son Alan – and making note of behaviour as well as mere identification.

Ray Smith will be best remembered for his great involvement with the Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* nest-box scheme in Yarnier Wood on the edge of Dartmoor, for it was there that he met Bruce Campbell in 1957 and together they revolutionised the Pied Flycatcher scene in Devon – and throughout other parts of England and Wales – studying the new nest-box colonies and ringing hundreds of nestlings and adults, the work continuing to this day.

Ray was also one of the principal ringers at Slapton Ley in Devon for many years, but later concentrated his ringing efforts nearer to his home in Exeter where I joined him, together with a friend, and we formed the Exeter Ringing Group.

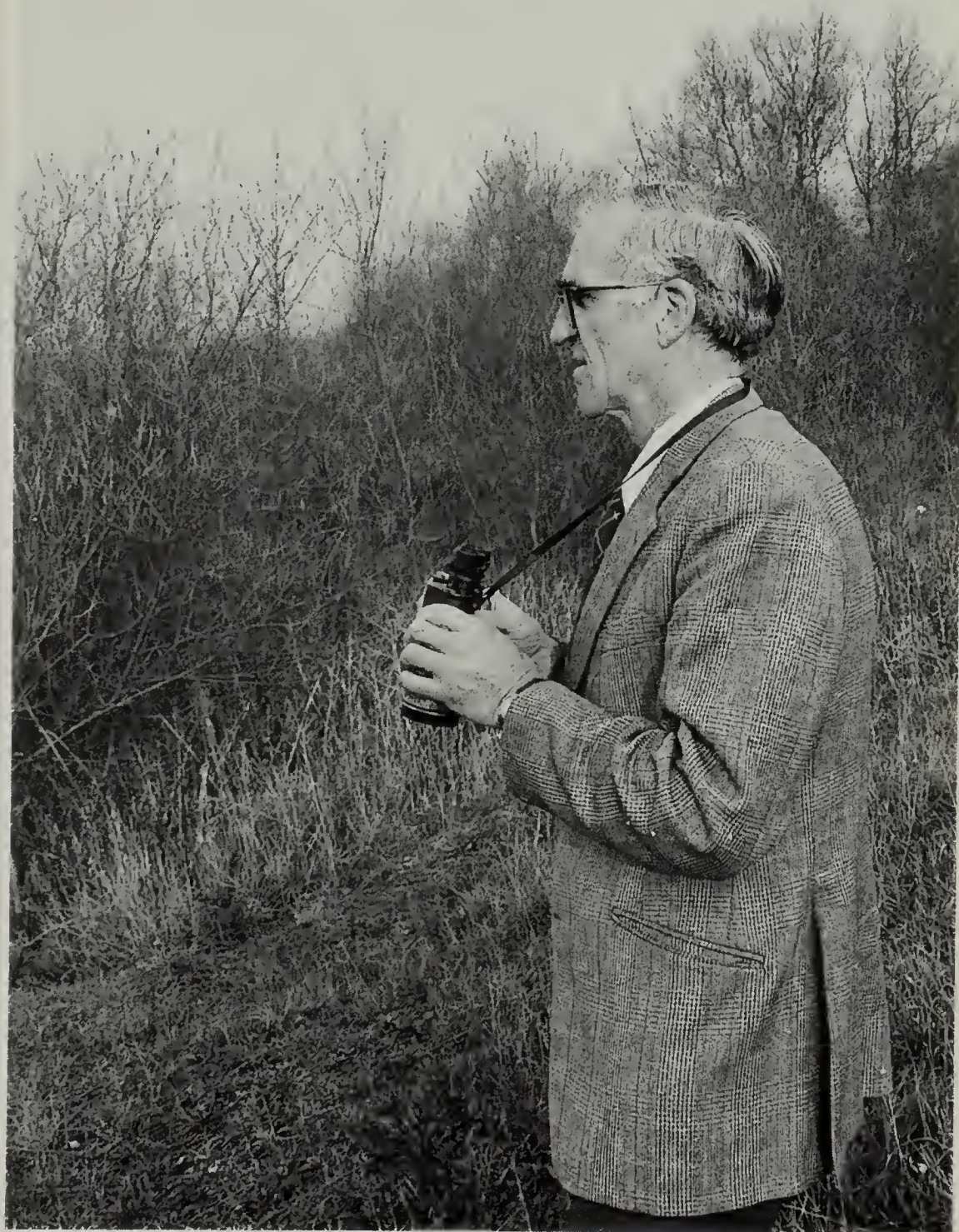
His ability to assess records was recognised at a national level for, when he was already the Recorder for the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society and produced the Society's annual bird report, he was invited to join the BBRC, on which he was a voting member for 13 years (1963-75) and Hon. Secretary for ten (1966-75).

Ray Smith died on 21st February 1992, at the age of 86, following a bout of pneumonia.

All who knew him will remember him as a shy, modest and unassuming man who was wholly sincere and cared for other people; one who avoided publicity and whose values were those of a true lover of nature. Like many, I feel fortunate to have spent many happy times with him and extend a belated message of sympathy to all his family.

ROBIN KHAN

Bruce Campbell OBE PhD (1912-1993)



228. Dr Bruce Campbell OBE, Oxfordshire, December 1976 (*John Knight/Oxfordshire County Council*)

With the passing of Bruce Campbell on 9th January 1993, British ornithology has lost an ardent enthusiast and a great supporter.

Bruce could lay claim to a number of 'firsts'. He was the first person to obtain a Doctorate in Ornithology in the UK. This was for a thesis entitled 'A comparison of bird populations upon "industrial" and "rural" farmland in South Wales', a study done, as the title suggests, of the birds of a variety of

agricultural areas in 1943 and 1944. The basic area which he used as his rural control was around Court Perrott, north of Newport, an area for which he eventually accumulated six years of census data (1942-47).

Another of his firsts was to see the value of, and set up on a permanent basis, what is now the longest-running nest-box study in the UK (perhaps anywhere, for, although the Dutch started earlier still, their study area has changed). In 1942, J. M. B. Brown had put up 84 nest-boxes in Nagshead Enclosure in the Forest of Dean and 15 had been occupied by Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*. Bruce was shown the 'Piedie Flies' in 1946, and in 1947 he went down to ring the chicks. This got him firmly hooked, and the nest-boxes in Nagshead Plantation became a life-long interest. For many years, Bruce was the catalyst of this study. In spite of a busy life, Bruce managed to maintain observations on the birds nesting in the Dean until the late 1960s. Much of the daily record-keeping was done by forestry students based in the Dean, but it was done under Bruce's supervision and he took an active and enthusiastic part, visiting the area many times each season. In 1974 the area became an RSPB reserve, and the records are still maintained. Bruce wrote a number of papers about them, of which perhaps the most useful was that in 1968 in *Forestry* (41: 27-46), which summarised the 20-odd years of the study to that date. He also, unavoidably, collected much information on Great Parus *Parus major* and Blue Tits *P. caeruleus* and took an interest in these, too, but the flycatchers were his greatest love.

Bruce was, first and foremost, a field ornithologist, with a wide general interest in natural history. Perhaps his most outstanding attribute was his skill at finding birds' nests; this was evident from his earliest years, his father having been an avid 'egger'. But he was not, at least in later years, much interested in egg-collecting; what came out of the egg was of far greater interest to him. His nest-finding was aided by an outstanding ability to climb trees and so reach nests others certainly could not. He played a key role in the setting up of the BTO's Nest Record Scheme, running it himself for many years. He was also one of the leading contributors: during the years 1954-87 he contributed more than 8,400 nest record cards, plus many colony record sheets. He married this skill with the ringing of the young whenever possible.

Bruce's first real job was with the Central Council for Recreative Physical Training, but his real love was always birds and he was invited to become the first full-time Secretary (= Director) of the BTO when it was based in Oxford; he took up this position in October 1948. He was often involved in broadcasting during these years and left the BTO just before it moved to Tring to become Senior Producer of the Natural History Unit of the BBC, a position he occupied for three years, playing an important part in the widening of interest in and understanding of the countryside. He then 'returned to Oxfordshire' (he never moved away during the years he worked for the BBC in Bristol) and became Advisory Editor of *The Countryman* from 1962 to 1989.

It is not possible to cover in any detail all the many things Bruce did, but, amongst his other positions, he was a Vice-President of the BTO and recipient of the Tucker Medal and one of the first of the BTO's Jubilee Medals, he was also Vice-President of the BOU and recipient of the Union

Medal, and he served on the Councils of the Wildfowl Trust, the RSPB, the British Ecological Society, the Oxford Ornithological Society (and was President), the Banbury Ornithological Society, the West Oxfordshire Field Club, and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists' Trust (and was Chairman). He was created an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year Honours in 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 42).

Although based in Oxford since 1948, Bruce was first and foremost a Scot, and whenever possible he was to be found scouring the hills of his beloved Argyll, where he spent many of his happiest boyhood months (although he was brought up in southern England, he spent school holidays with his family in Scotland). Others might pursue their ornithology in more distant parts of Europe or even farther afield. Bruce did travel abroad, particularly in the period when he was Secretary of the BTO, but foreign lands seemed to hold only a low appeal. For Bruce, Scotland filled all his needs and in his later years he rarely went abroad, though he perhaps regarded Oxfordshire as that.

Bruce published a number of books. Perhaps the most important ornithologically is *A Dictionary of Birds* (1985), virtually a complete rewrite of the older work by Landsborough Thomson, which he edited with Elizabeth Lack; it remains, in my view, without peer as a reference book. *Birdwatcher at Large* (1979) is an autobiography which provides much more information about his life than space allows here. We miss him. C. M. PERRINS

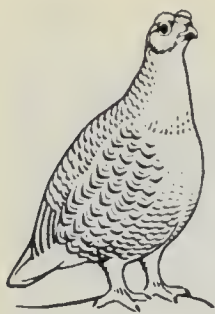


Twenty-five years ago...

'In the old days a British bird-watcher, not looking beyond his home islands, required no adjective to distinguish the only species of kite that frequents them. Today, almost surely using *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, he does need an adjective to separate it from the Black Kite *Milvus migrans* and so one is glad to see that *M. milvus* has become the Red Kite.

'In America the name Duck Hawk has been giving way to that of Peregrine Falcon for *Falco peregrinus* and one looks forward to the day when *Stercorarius parasiticus* becomes the Arctic Skua instead of the Parasitic Jaeger. Is it visionary to hope, as well, for the time when the Short-billed Gull of the Pacific coast of America and the Common Gull of Europe, both *Larus canus*, become the circumpolar Mew Gull?' (Louis J. Halle in *Brit. Birds* 61: 573-574, December 1968).

Also in December 1968, two Little Bustards *Tetrax tetrax* were found dead in Norfolk, near Diss on 19th and near King's Lynn on 31st. How many others remained undiscovered?



Diary dates

This list covers January to December 1994

7th-9th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre. Details from Jackie Clark, BTO, The Nunery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

29th-30th January YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB GARDEN BIRDWATCH SURVEY. Details from YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

5th March SOC SPRING CONFERENCE. Aberdeen University. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

15th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

25th-27th March IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY/RSPB ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. Garryvoe Hotel, Shanagarry, Ballycotton, Co. Cork. Details from IWC, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin.

26th March WELSH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Department of Information and Library Studies, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. Details from Jean McBeth, Minas Tirith, Llanfihangel-y-Creuddyn, Aberystwyth. Dyfed SY23 4LA.

6th-10th April BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. 'Bird Conservation in action.' Shuttleworth Agricultural College, Bedfordshire. Details from Mrs Gwen Bonham, BOU, c/o The Natural History Museum, Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP. [Offers of papers to Nicola Crockford, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.]

8th-10th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. Warwick University. Details from Yvonne Brown, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

May 'IN FOCUS' BIRDSPACE. County birdwatch. In association with BirdLife International. Details and entry forms from Lesley Stanton, BirdLife International, Wellbrook

Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

21st-22nd May Birdathon '94. YOC NATIONAL SPONSORED BIRDWATCH. Details from YOC.

25th June ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB MEETING. Manchester. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

28th July to 12th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

12th-18th August BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 21ST WORLD CONFERENCE. Rosenheim, Germany. Details from Georgina Green, BirdLife International.

19th-20th August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Eggleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire. Enquiries to Tim Appleton, Fishponds Cottage, Stamford Road, Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 8AB.

20th-25th August XXI INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS. Hofberg, Vienna, Austria. Details from IOC Interconvention, Friedrichstrasse 7, A-1043 Vienna, Austria.

28th August OBC MEETING. Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from OBC.

1st October RSPB AGM. Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London. Details from Yvonne Brown, RSPB.

October/November SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Details from SOC.

2nd-4th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Swanwick. Details from BTO.

10th December OBC TENTH ANNIVERSARY AGM. Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regent's Park, London. Details from OBC.

Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3AJ



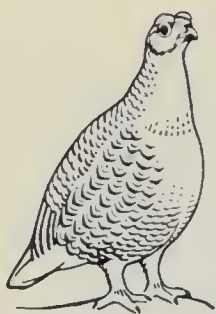
Mystery photographs



229. Mystery photograph 192. Identify the species. Answer on pages 651-653



Inclusion of plate 229 in colour has been subsidised by support from Carl Zeiss (Oberkochen) Ltd



Announcements

'The Carl Zeiss Award' *Carl Zeiss Germany*, sponsor of the Rarities Committee, is offering an annual prize of *Carl Zeiss* 10 × 40 B/GAT Dialyt or 7 × 42 B/GAT binoculars to the photographer who supplies 'the most helpful, interesting and instructive' photograph of a rarity, taken in Britain. The photograph, a colour print, black-and-white print or transparency, must have been submitted (in the usual ways, via the relevant county bird recorder or directly to the Rarities Committee) with a description or set of descriptions which circulates to the Committee (or in time to circulate to the Committee with descriptions submitted by others). The winning photograph may be big, bright, sharp and beautiful, or be small, dull, fuzzy and admired only by the Committee, but it will have included details which helped to clinch the identification of the bird in question and it may well have added to ornithological knowledge of the species' identification, ageing or sexing criteria. The winning photograph will be picked by the Chairman of the Rarities Committee and the Managing Editor of *British Birds* from a short-list selected during the year by the ten members of the Committee. The third Award will be made from among 1993 (and earlier) photographs of birds accepted for inclusion in the 1994 report. The winner will be announced in November 1994.



The aim of this award is to encourage the submission of potentially useful photographs to the Rarities Committee, for record assessment, as subsequent reference material, and for possible publication. Runners-up in the competition, and photographers whose rarity photographs have been selected for publication during the year (in the rarities report itself or in 'Seasonal reports'), will each receive a sew-on woven badge incorporating the Carl Zeiss Award logo, in recognition of their contributions to the rarity assessment process. Each year, the winning photograph will be published in *British Birds*. The winner will be able to choose which *Carl Zeiss* binoculars he or she would prefer as a prize.

Bird Photograph of the Year In 1994, this annual competition will again be sponsored jointly by Christopher Helm Publishers and HarperCollins Publishers. The rules will be the same as those this year (*Brit. Birds* 86: 27), but the photographs must have been taken during 1993. There will again be an additional prize, the Windrush Photos Award, for the highest-placed photograph taken by an entrant aged under 21 years (please state date of birth if eligible). The closing date is 31st January 1994. Please send in your transparencies early.

Bird Illustrator of the Year The closing date for this competition, which will again be sponsored by *Kowa* telescopes, is Tuesday 15th March 1994. Required dimensions of entries will be the same as for this year (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 27).

Binding your 'BB' Standard book-binding of *BB* issues costs £18.48 per volume. Use the form on the back of the index, and send yours in to arrive *before* one of the four annual deadlines: 15th January, 15th March, 1st July and 1st October. The binders' address is: London Journal Bindery, Roslin Road, London W3 8DH, telephone 081-752 0552.

Coming soon in 'BB' As well as *Hippolais* warbler identification (see page 623), other papers 'in the pipeline' will be covering King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* numbers, choughs *Pyrrhonorax* and jackdaws *Corvus*, Pied *Oenanthe pleschanka* and Cyprus Pied Wheatears *O. cyprica*, pollutants in Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*, an invited paper on species and subspecies, 'splitting' and 'lumping', Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* census, Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus*, British woodpecker (Picidae) biology, the latest official report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, and 'The strange case of the Whistling Oofoo'.

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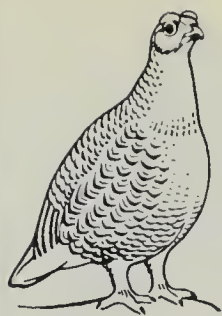


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Requests

Colour-marked birds: a reminder Although colour-marking may be used in purely local studies (e.g. of behaviour), the majority of studies of marked populations depend upon co-operation from all observers who sight the marked individuals. Only in exceptional instances do we publish separate requests on this subject (there are far too many such studies to include them all). If you see a bird marked in some way (other than with ordinary BTO rings), please report it as follows:

CORMORANTS Colour-ring sightings, Dr Robin Sellers, Rose Cottage, Ragnall Lane, Walkley Wood, Nailsworth, Gloucester GL6 0RU.

SWANS AND GEESE Colour-ring sightings, Carl Mitchell, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT.

WADERS Wader Study Group, PO Box 247, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5SN.

GULLS Large gulls: Peter Rock, 32 Kersteman Road, Redlands, Bristol BS6 7BX; small gulls: BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

ALL OTHER SPECIES Kevin Baker, BTO.

Hippo photos The text is completed for a forthcoming major paper on *Hippolais* warblers by Hadoram Shirihai, David A. Christie and Alan Harris.

To complete the photographic selection, good-quality transparencies or prints showing individuals in the field are needed as follows:

Olivaceous Warbler	<i>H. pallida</i>	autumn: worn adult
Booted Warbler	<i>H. caligata</i>	autumn: worn adult
Olive-tree Warbler	<i>H. olivetorum</i>	autumn: worn adult
Icterine Warbler	<i>H. icterina</i>	all plumages
Melodious Warbler	<i>H. polyglotta</i>	all plumages

Please send original colour transparencies or colour prints to Mrs Sheila Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

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Drawings of rare breeding birds

Artists may care to note that line-drawings are included within the report on 'Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom' every year, and that *British Birds* always welcomes the submission of drawings of appropriate species for possible selection. Sizes should be those specified for the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition: 16.35 cm wide \times 6.9 cm deep, or 8.1 cm wide \times 6.0 cm deep, for publication at two-thirds of those sizes. Please send drawings to the *BB* Editorial Office.



Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



The thick-billed passerine (plate 209) was named by competitors as:

Blue Chaffinch <i>Fringilla teydea</i>	(75%)
Yellow-throated Sparrow <i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	(8%)
Common Chaffinch <i>F. coelebs</i>	(7%)
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	(6%)

with a few votes for Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*, Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* and two for Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*.

It was a female Blue Chaffinch, photographed by A. S. Butler on Tenerife in October 1988 (SCORE 25). The first person to achieve a score of 500 will win a birding trip with SUNBIRD to Africa, Asia or North America.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DE; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.



230. Sixth 'Monthly marathon', using new rules (see page 149); eleventh stage: photo no. 90. Identify the species. Send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK41 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1994



Notes

Common Buzzard taking Common Teal in flight On 24th November 1985, at Milngavie Reservoir, Lanarkshire, I saw a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* drop on to a Common Teal *Anas crecca* in flight and carry it off. The duck had taken off with a flock of wildfowl which also included Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*, Eurasian Wigeons *A. penelope*, Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* and Common Pochards *A. ferina*. The Common Teal did not appear to lag behind the main flock.

D. KENNEY

6 Staffin Street, Summerston, Glasgow G23 5EJ

Although the Common Buzzard is an opportunistic feeder, taking whatever is available, this record of one catching in flight such a fast and agile prey as a Common Teal is noteworthy. EDS

Hobbies nesting on pylon During work for the new Bedfordshire breeding atlas, fieldworkers surveyed areas of the county rarely visited by birdwatchers: arable farmland. In Bedfordshire, these areas are quite extensively crossed by power lines and associated pylons, which are often the most prominent structures in an otherwise flat and featureless landscape. During 1988, intensive fieldwork in one 10-km square resulted in three nests of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* being located approximately 3 km apart. At one site, a pair successfully reared three juveniles from an old nest of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* situated some 10 m from the ground in the outer arm of a pylon of the box-girder type. At all three sites, Hobbies were seen to use pylons as observation platforms and plucking posts. Although Fieuzynski & Nethersole-Thompson (*Brit. Birds* 73: 293) referred to Hobbies breeding in artificial nests in Germany, I can find no reference to this species nesting on man-made structures.

PAUL TRODD

17 Northall Road, Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire LU6 2DQ

Dr Humphrey Crick has informed us that the nest record cards of the BTO contain no records of Hobbies nesting on man-made structures, although there are recent records of Peregrine Falcons *F. peregrinus* using such sites. He adds: 'It would certainly seem to be quite a wonderful way to allow these birds to spread further, although I am not sure how safe they would be from the depredations of egg-collectors etc.' EDS

Common Coot eating its own egg At about 06.30 hours on 5th April 1990, while checking a set of seven nests of Common Coot *Fulica atra* on the conduit that carries the River Ver through Verulamium Park, St Albans, Hertfordshire, I saw an incubating coot eat the contents of one of its eggs. As I walked along the adjacent path at a distance of 3-5 m from the nests (the coots are fully habituated to people using the park), I passed the penultimate

nest to check the last one some 30-40 m farther downstream. On returning, I could see that the Common Coot was holding an egg in its mouth, apparently with its lower mandible puncturing the shell. It placed the egg beside its right flank and then ate the contents, apparently as they* dribbled out, covering its beak and frontal lobe with yolk. Finally, it pushed the egg back underneath its body and continued incubating.

Such behaviour by Common Coots appears not to have been recorded before (cf. *Brit. Birds* 40: 199-203; 62: 134-143). Among the British rails and crakes (Rallidae), bigamous male Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* or one of their mates were recorded destroying eggs laid by the other female (D. W. Gibbons, *Behav. Ecol. Sociobiol.* 19: 221-232), and a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* destroyed an egg that had not hatched within 24 hours of the rest of its clutch of nine eggs (Lord William Percy, 1951, *Three Studies in Bird Character*). Neither of these records, however, is similar to that in St Albans.

HUMPHREY Q. P. CRICK

British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

Derek Goodwin has queried whether this may have been a response to accidental egg breakage. A similar instance to that above, however, involved a Moorhen deliberately piercing a hole in one of its own eggs and feeding the contents to its chicks (*Brit. Birds* 62: 116). EDS

Common Coot feeding eggshell to young At 18.35 hours on 13th May 1991, in the Birstall Lakes Park, north of Leicester, I noticed the nest of a Common Coot *Fulica atra* with three recently hatched young. Although their down was dry, none of the nestlings was attempting to leave the nest, though all were begging for food. Both parents were in attendance. The egg-tooth was clearly visible on each chick. As I watched, one of the parents appeared to feed a chick with a white substance from within the nest. This was repeated, and when I watched carefully through binoculars the substance proved to be eggshell which had been broken into small pieces. On the following day, I revisited the site: the young had left, but it was not possible to examine the nest cup to check how much shell remained.

D. A. C. McNEIL

175 Byron Street, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 0JN

Juvenile Common Coot incubating eggs On 8th July 1991, at Pugneys Country Park, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, a pair of Common Coots *Fulica atra* had laid a second clutch of eggs in a nest on a small pile of stones at the water's edge of the reserve lake. Their first clutch had produced two young, one of which, now well grown, was close by the nest. One of the adults (easily identified, as it had streaks of white on its head and neck) had been about for some months and was assumed, from previous observations while it attended its mate during incubation of the first brood, to be the male. This individual was now incubating the second clutch. The juvenile coot was seen to swim towards the nest, carrying some nest material, which it dropped at the foot of

the nest on the pile of stones. It then climbed out of the water and up on to the nest, and the male left the nest and entered the water. At least two eggs were visible in the nest. The juvenile settled on to the eggs and began to incubate. Some two or three minutes later, another adult Common Coot, presumed to be the female, swam towards the nest and climbed on to it. The juvenile got up from the eggs and moved to one side, closely watching the female, before sitting down on one side of the nest. The female then settled on the eggs, side by side with the juvenile and facing in the same direction. The two remained in this position for at least 15 minutes, before I left. During the time both coots were on the nest together, the female began first to preen herself and then to preen the head and neck of the juvenile.

GEOFFREY CARR

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Juvenile Common Coots and Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* are both known to help in feeding their later-brood siblings (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 67: 150-151; Fjeldså, 1977, *The Coot and the Moorhen*). We are, however, unaware of any records of juvenile Common Coots assisting in incubation, although this has been recorded for juvenile Moorhens (*Brit. Birds* 57: 123). EDS

Whimbrels perching on overhead electricity cables On 26th December 1988, in the coastal marshes near Banjul, The Gambia, I saw seven Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* perched on overhead electricity cables along the side of a main road (plate 231). There was no aerial predator visible, but a predator may have been in the mangrove bushes below, causing the Whimbrels to take refuge on the wires. Another explanation may have been that they were roosting at high tide (cf. *Brit. Birds* 78: 236; 83: 289). Single Whimbrels were observed on other occasions perched at the top of dead trees about 12 m above the mangrove swamps, but no others were seen to use electricity cables.

PHILIP PALMER

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231. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, perching on electricity cable, The Gambia, December 1988
(Philip Palmer)

Spotted Sandpiper displaying to and mating with Common Sandpiper On 5th June 1990, at Elland gravel-pits, West Yorkshire, I watched a Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* frequently display to a Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*. It also spent much time in surrounding vegetation, apparently calling to its congener. At 20.00 GMT, I was able to approach the waders to within about 50 m without disturbing them. From cover, I observed the Spotted Sandpiper approach the Common Sandpiper and display: it raised its wings vertically and circled the latter in a buoyant and bouncing manner, this culminating in its mating with the Common Sandpiper and then taking flight, calling quite loudly. The Common Sandpiper did not seem unduly excited and proceeded to splash itself at the water's edge and then preen.

DAVID LAWRENCE

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Glaucous Gulls feeding at overturned icebergs On 16th July 1989, at Jakobshavns Icefjord, Jakobshavn (Ilulissat), West Greenland, we noticed that, when an iceberg was turning over in the sea, four or five Glaucous Gulls *Larus hyperboreus* soon arrived to feed on the surface of the water and of the overturned ice, probably on crustaceans or other organisms brought to the surface by the movement of ice. The loud thunder-like sound caused by the crash of ice into the sea may have attracted the gulls.

The next day, the remains of a very big iceberg (weighing millions of tonnes) had covered the sea area for several kilometres around with pieces of crashed ice (one caused the death of three sailors). Within a few hours, about 170 Glaucous Gulls were feeding in the same manner, where previously we had seen no more than ten. Similar opportunistic feeding behaviour was recorded by Harrison (1979, *Condor* 81: 93-95) in the Bering Sea, where bottom-feeding grey whales *Eschrichtius robustus* were bringing quantities of detritus to the surface.

FULVIO FRATICELLI and ALESSANDRO MONTEMAGGIORI
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Common Terns feeding on fishermen's bait On 27th June 1987, at Priory Country Park, Bedford, I noticed several Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* feeding on pupae of the blowfly *Calliphora vomitoria* placed on the water as bait by fishermen. On 30th June 1990, within a minute of two handfuls of this bait being thrown, nine Common Terns arrived and hovered over the food, picking it from the surface; they normally carried out this activity about 3-4 m from the shoreline, but when the fisherman was rebaiting his line they fed as close as 1-1.5 m to him. I have noticed this behaviour on several other dates. It did not begin on the first day of the fishing season, but after 11 days in 1987 and 14 in 1990, suggesting that a learning period is involved.

DAVID KRAMER

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Letters

Daurian Redstart in Scotland Dr Alan Knox's paper on behalf of the BOU Records Committee on the occurrence of the Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* on the Isle of May, Fife, in 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 359-366) highlights well the problems of maintaining the British List. On the evidence presented, it would appear that the bird was not of 'natural' origin, but had reached the island through the agency of man. The broken primary tips were cited among the supporting evidence for this conclusion. If the same criterion was generally applied to other rare species, some recently accepted records must also be reduced to the status of 'non-bird', so far as the British List is concerned.

As a prime example, we would refer to the Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus* caught on Fair Isle, Shetland, in spring 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 603-612). The hand-held bird shows clearly in the photographs published (plates 367 & 369) that at least two primaries of the left wing and one of the right have the tips broken off, exactly as Dr Knox points out on the Daurian Redstart. The written description mentions 'slight wear on outermost (2nd) primary', a rather economical understatement. The tail is also mentioned as having a broken outer feather. The photographs show a bedraggled tail in which the state of wear would be difficult to assess. Despite these hallmarks of captivity, the BOURC accepted the record as being of genuine occurrence. Double standards appear to be being operated by the Committee, and one or other species should be reviewed.

Some anomalies appear in Dr Knox's review of the Daurian Redstart which we can perhaps clarify. The cause of death was by inhalation of fine dust particles disturbed in the burrow when the bird was caught. This was obvious from the mouth and oesophageal tract when BZ skinned the bird. There were no injuries or subcutaneous marks to show that the bird had been manhandled. Catching birds which have gone down burrows on the Isle of May happens occasionally and has never previously proved hazardous for the birds caught. The Daurian Redstart had been unfrozen for a few days and then frozen and defrosted prior to skinning, and hence showed signs of feather 'slipping' around the rump and tail (as is obvious in plate 116); the other central tail feather had fallen out *before* the bird was skinned (as seen in the same photograph), not during skinning as was suggested. The dehydration and desiccation may account for the weight discrepancies mentioned: the weight at capture (taken by KB) is undoubtedly the more accurate.

As can also be seen from plate 116 and from fig. 1 on page 365, the legs were brown, not black, as described by Marc Jones and Robert Proctor in

their notes. The bird was fully grown, according to its skull pneumatization, and the testes were enlarged. It would probably have bred (or hybridised) that summer. The hirundine flea, which had been adhering to the bird, was probably from one of the nests of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* on the Isle of May, in which the Redstart may have roosted. This practice, and the bird's habit of entering rabbit burrows, could account for the damage to the primaries.

Although perhaps academic, it is worth recording that the Daurian Redstart had a full stomach, and the following invertebrates were identified: an adult Carabid beetle, an adult Curculionid weevil, some adult Dipteran flies, some Lepidoptera larvae, some midge larvae, a spider and a beetle larva. Clearly, the bird had no difficulty finding adequate food and thus maintaining its body condition, which was, in our opinion, good. This also suggests that the bird seen on 23rd March was probably the same one. There is an abundance of invertebrates on the Isle of May at most times of the year, and any insectivorous species could survive with little chance of starvation.

BERNARD ZONFRILLO and KEITH BROCKIE

28 Brodie Road, Glasgow G21 3SB

We understand that the BOU Records Committee was already, even before the comments by Bernard Zonfrillo and Keith Brockie in this letter, re-examining the evidence concerning the origins of the Daurian Starling which occurred on Fair Isle. EDS

Song Thrushes feeding on periwinkles McCanch & McCanch (*Brit. Birds* 85: 618) reported a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* feeding on periwinkles *Littorina littorea* during a period of severely cold weather in Kent. Marine molluscs may form a more-usual component of the diet of Hebridean Song Thrushes *T. p. hebridensis*. This race is described in the *Handbook of British Birds* (Witherby *et al.*, vol. 2, pp. 118-119, 1940) as frequenting the seashore in winter and picking up snails and marine molluscs. While on the Isle of Harris (Meavag, near Tarbert), Outer Hebrides, on 8th September 1974, I watched 'three or four' Song Thrushes feeding amongst the tidal rocks on periwinkles, which they smashed against the rocks. I found several smashed shells and, after watching one bird closely, noted that the 'shells require quite a bit of bashing'. Periwinkle shells are considerably thicker than *Cepaea* or land-snail shells and may represent an energetically more-expensive food resource. Use of the littoral zone in this way may be an important adaptation enabling Song Thrushes to colonise and survive in relatively barren island habitats, and it would be interesting to discover the extent to which Hebridean Song Thrushes rely on marine snails as a food source.

CHRIS REDFERN

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Song Thrushes feeding on periwinkles I was most intrigued to read the note and letter on Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* feeding on periwinkles from McCanch & McCanch (*Brit. Birds* 85: 618) and Hardy (*Brit. Birds* 86: 134) and

Derek Goodwin's comment appended to the first contribution. This habit is much commoner than the authors suggested. The following is a direct quote from page 105 of my book *British Thrushes* (1978):

'Marine molluscs are perhaps taken more widely by some of the thrush species than has been previously suspected, especially in cold weather. O. D. Hunt watched a score of song thrushes feeding on common periwinkles (*Littorina littorea*) in January 1963 along the shoreline of St John's Lake on the Cornish side of the Tamar estuary; "they were beating the molluscs out of their shells on stones". Some of the birds worked away on the beach while others carried the molluscs to cliff-top anvils normally used for dealing with garden snails. This habit has been regularly recorded on the estuary of the Exe in Devon and was described in the County Bird Report for 1940. Following on notes in the journal *British Birds* the editors asked for further information about this habit of shoreline feeding and they received nine replies. C. J. Feare (1967) writing about the enquiry observed that the habit of thrushes feeding in the littoral zone "does not seem to be uncommon". Both common periwinkles and the rough winkle (*L. saxatilis*) have been found in the diets of blackbird, mistle thrush, song thrush, Hebridean song thrush and redwing. Song thrushes will also feed on dog whelks (*Thais=Nucella lapillus*)—a habit mentioned by Howard Saunders in 1899 in his *An Illustrated Manual of British Birds*—and perhaps on topshells (*Gibbula*) as well. In cold weather fieldfares can sometimes be seen exploring the beach for small marine animals. Hebridean song thrushes have been known to take small crabs and Bernard King watched song thrushes in September 1959 on St Agnes in the Isles of Scilly competing with turnstones and dunlin for the crop of sandhoppers (*Gammarus locusta*) that appeared on the wet sand and in the tide wrack. Marine worms may also form a food resource and blackbirds have been recorded taking lugworms (*Arenicola*), ribbon worms and greenish polychaete worms from the sands on the Solent and song thrushes lugworms at low tide on the Isles of Scilly.

'Many of these observations illustrate the wide tastes of members of the genus *Turdus*.'

I know how easy it is to overlook previous records, but *British Birds* seems to have ignored its own request for information on this topic as well as the paragraph in my own book. During 56 years of publishing my own ornithological discoveries, observations and bibliographical references I have experienced at least a dozen examples in which these have been ignored or missed. It is a pity if obvious sources are not consulted.

ERIC SIMMS

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We do try to refer to relevant parts of the extensive ornithological literature before publishing notes, in which we aim to record original observations, but we are fallible; we accept Mr Simms's criticism. EDS

Treecreeper puzzle Hans Schouten reported four Short-toed Treecreepers *Certhia brachydactyla* roosting in a tree crevice (*Brit. Birds* 86: 369-370), but I consider that his photograph (plate 122) shows at least five and probably six individuals.

ALAN HARRIS

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Hans Schouten now agrees that six may be the correct count. He has kindly supplied an additional transparency, in which the treecreepers are in slightly different positions. Alan Harris has perused and analysed this second photograph in detail, and has demonstrated that it shows parts of at least six different individuals. EDS

The sparrows fall Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 86: 275) has drawn the attention of *British Birds* readers to the suggestion that there have been recent declines in the numbers of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in Britain. We

should like to correct the statement that the species has not been covered by the British Trust for Ornithology's Common Birds Census (see Marchant *et al.* 1990). Furthermore, BTO data confirm a shallow decline in House Sparrow numbers over the last 16 years.

House Sparrows were specifically excluded from the CBC in instructions issued up to the early 1970s, on the grounds that problems of access to buildings and of estimating the sizes of large colonies made censuses impractical at many sites. Subsequently, however, observers were encouraged to count House Sparrows wherever possible, although the number of plots for which we receive data remains relatively small. Our recent review of population changes (Marchant *et al.* 1990) found that censuses had been taken at enough sites to allow an index of House Sparrow population size to begin in 1976 (fig. 1). This index shows a 32% decline in House Sparrow numbers between 1976 and 1992 (based on an average of around 50 plots in each year-to-year comparison), supporting Dr Sharrock's contention.

Other data collected by the BTO are consistent with a recent decrease. Winter counts from suburban gardens in the BTO's Garden Bird Feeding Survey peaked in the winter of 1976/77 (after highly successful breeding in the hot, dry summer of 1976), and declined by 15-20% over the period 1978-88 (Thompson 1988). Changes in House Sparrow distribution between 1968-72 (Sharrock 1976) and 1988-91 are evident in the maps of *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). There have been losses in northern Scotland, the Scottish borders and Ireland. Summers-Smith (1993) speculates in *The New Atlas* that the apparent decline is due mainly to reductions in food supply through increasing intensification of farmland. Interestingly, other European monitoring schemes suggest that House Sparrow populations have been relatively stable over the last ten years (Hustings 1992).

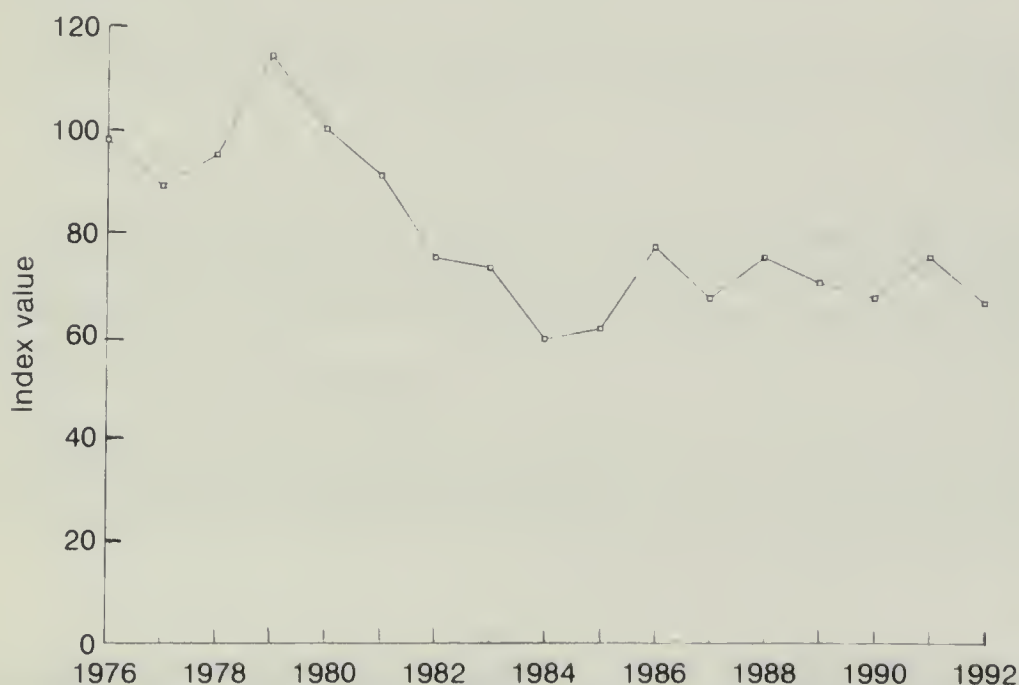


Fig. 1. Common Birds Census index values for House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. The index was set arbitrarily at 100 in 1980. Data were drawn from all plots, irrespective of habitat

Common Birds Censuses are taken almost exclusively on farmland and in woodland, while many, or perhaps most, House Sparrows nest in urban and suburban habitats. On farmland especially, it is still the case that many census-takers omit House Sparrows from their returns. For these reasons, and because numbers are relatively variable between sites, we cannot be sure how well our results represent the real changes in population size. It is hoped that the BTO's new Breeding Bird Survey, which will cover all habitats, and because of its random selection of counting sites will be far more representative of Britain as a whole, will provide a better measure of population changes for House Sparrow (among other species) from 1994 onwards. Please contact Dr Richard Gregory at the BTO if you would like further information about this new survey, which begins in the spring of 1994.

The CBC is funded under a contract from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on behalf of English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales, and Scottish Natural Heritage, and under a contract from the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

DAWN BALMER and JOHN MARCHANT

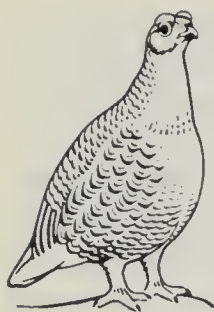
Census Unit, British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

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We are delighted that the kite flown in 'News and comment' has provoked this useful response from the BTO. We have also received nine letters from subscribers commenting on the situation in their local areas, seven confirming decreases (Geoffrey Carr, West Yorkshire; K. Heron, Staffordshire; J. Holt, East Sussex; J. G. Parker, Norfolk; K. G. Spencer, Lancashire; Paul Trodd, Bedfordshire; and Duncan Wood, Lancashire) and two reporting no sign of a decline (Derek Goodwin, Kent; Mrs J. Irvine, Hampshire). Geoffrey Carr particularly drew a comparison with the position many years ago when huge flocks formed to feed on stooked corn, and K. G. Spencer drew attention to his *The Countryside Around Us* (1989), where he commented that 'Post-breeding flocks in the countryside ("town sparrows on their holidays", as Clifford Oakes used to call them) are less often seen, and communal roosts in winter time are . . . becoming more exceptional.' The *West Midland Bird Club Bulletin* (no. 369, September/October 1993) included the question 'But can anyone tell me where have all the House Sparrows gone? Very few visited my bird table through the winter and virtually none through the summer.'

In addition, Dr Hans-Günther Bauer has drawn our attention to the paper by himself and George Heine (*J. Orn.* 133: 1-22) documenting a 22.1% decline in numbers of House Sparrows between 1980/81 and 1990/91 found by comparing line-transect counts by 100 observers in 278 tetrads in Austria, Germany and Switzerland around Lake Constance. Eds



Reviews

Great Auk Islands: a field biologist in the Arctic. By **Tim Birkhead.** Illustrated by **David Quinn.** T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1993. 275 pages; 14 colour plates; 91 black-and-white plates; 36 line-drawings. ISBN 0-85661-077-1. £22.00.

The title of this book is a *double entendre*, using the strict definition of that phrase: 'to have two meanings'. This is principally an account of the author's experiences studying seabirds, mainly Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* and Brünnich's Guillemot *U. lomvia*, on islands in the Canadian High Arctic and off the coast of Labrador. Sandwiched within this is a section devoted to the Great Auk *Alca impennis*.

One of the islands visited in the course of the author's seven summers in Canada was Funk Island, off the coast of Newfoundland, the site of one of the two known breeding colonies of Great Auks on that side of the Atlantic. It was this that stimulated thoughts on how these birds actually lived, and there follows a fascinating survey of the existing, often rather skimpy, knowledge of their breeding biology, fleshed out with careful deduction and hypothesis based on the author's detailed studies of the two smaller auks. By assembling the available evidence from old accounts of the bird and adding his own scientific judgments, Tim Birkhead concludes that the young of Great Auks were precocial, leaving the nesting site within a few days of hatching. Among arguments he puts forward in favour of this theory is that it would relieve the flightless adults of the high energy expenditure of carrying food back to the chick in the nest, which in turn would have to be guarded by one of the parents. Perhaps surprisingly, the parallel with penguins, which do exactly this, is not drawn.

As an aside, I particularly liked the story that, because of the exceptionally high demand for Great Auk skins once they had become extinct, taxonomists at the Hancock Museum in Newcastle upon Tyne used to make up fakes using, among other bits and pieces, the wings of Razorbills *Alca torda*, which were almost exactly the right size.

The details of the author's research on guillemots are presented in a most readable text, accompanied by apposite photographs and excellent line-drawings, wrapped up in what is, essentially, a travelogue, detailing some of the perils as well as the enjoyment of moving around in a part of the world where communications and transport are often difficult or erratic, or both. The fisherman who took the author and other biologists out to one group of remote islands insisted on being paid on arrival at the islands. He never returned to pick them up.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and can wholeheartedly recommend it, whether your interests are islands, the Arctic or, indeed, auks, great or small.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

Rare Birds in Britain 1992. By **L. G. R. Evans.** Evans, Little Chalfont, 1993. 167 pages; 16 colour plates; 28 line-drawings; 33 distribution maps. Paperback £9.95.

This, Lee Evans's third annual labour of love, contains a remarkable number of rarity and scarce-migrant records, gleaned from the various rare-bird information lines, county recorders and individual observers.

Whilst his 'judge and jury' approach generally works well with the major rarities, the big question is: how accurate is the rest of the book? To test this, I compared *Rare Birds* with my own county's annual publication, the high-quality *Avon Bird Report*. I discovered discrepancies with 32 of the 42 records which I found in the two publications. These largely involved differences with

dates, but Evans missed 14 records published in the local report and included five that were either rejected by, or not submitted to, the local committee. This may not, of course, necessarily be an indictment of the author, since his book is only as good as the information received, but it does emphasise the size and difficulty of his task.

Despite this, it is an attractive, well-designed and well-produced publication with some excellent colour photographs and distribution maps, while the author's own refreshing enthusiasm is readily apparent. From my point of view, its strong point is its analyses of the scarce migrants, which are not readily available in other publications (for example, who would have guessed that there were nearly 10,000 Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* reported in 1992?).

I must admit that I feel uneasy about the increasing trend towards publishing unsubstantiated sightings, but, if one accepts that it is not definitive, then it can clearly be regarded as a useful and recommended supplement to the twitcher's library, and one that will no doubt continue to evolve. The author can certainly be congratulated on his hard work.

KEITH VINICOMBE

The Kestrel. By Michael Shrubbs. Hamlyn, London, 1993. 128 pages; 13 colour plates; 4 colour illustrations; 21 line-drawings. ISBN 0-540-01278-5. Paperback £9.99.

Not only is the Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* the one raptor that everyone can easily see, it is also one of the best researched, having in recent years been subject to detailed studies in several parts of Europe. This most recent book on the species provides a brief descriptive account which draws heavily on some of this research, and at the same time contains some of the author's own observations and some new analyses of nest records and ringing recoveries from the British Trust for Ornithology.

The layout of the book is fairly conventional, with chapters on races and distribution, habitat and population, food and hunting, territory and display, breeding, moult, roosting, movements and mortality. In depth of treatment, the book lies somewhere between the Poyser volume on the Kestrel by Andrew Village (1990), which is the most detailed and scientifically rigorous, and the popular and highly personalised account of the species by Gordon Riddle (1991).

Michael Shrubbs's book is readable and succinctly written, and, by today's standards, reasonably priced.

I. NEWTON

The Black Robin: saving the world's most endangered bird. By David Butler & Don Merton. OUP, New York, 1992.

294 pages. ISBN 0-19-558260-8. Paperback £19.50) This is an adventure story, documenting the trials and tribulations of the successful (so far) rescue from extinction of the Chatham Islands Robin *Petroica traversi*. It has, in reality, been saved three times: first by the inaccessibility of its last refuge, Little Mangere Island, which remained free of rats, cats and other such ground predators; secondly by its not being recognised as a full species until the middle of this century, thereby avoiding the unwanted attention of Victorian bird-collectors; and thirdly by the experimental translocation from Little Mangere to Mangere Island and South East Island and fostering by other species, notably the (despite its name) closely related Tomtit *Petroica macrocephala chathamensis*.

The book is well written and well illustrated, and those not interested in the minutiae can easily skip the bits of scientific detail, for, although this is a complete history of the

successful experiments, the story is told largely in narrative form.

JTRS

Camouflage in Nature: changing colour for survival. By Marco Ferrari. (Prion, London, 1993. 144 pages. ISBN 1-85375-113-8. £18.99) The large format (36 cm × 26 cm) allows the stunning photographs to be reproduced at huge size for maximum impact. Unfortunately, the subjects are almost invariably far too large, so that the camouflaged animal is perfectly obvious and its background is scarcely shown. How much better this book would have been had one needed to look at each illustration hard in order to find the camouflaged creature.

JTRS

A Birdwatchers' Guide to Southern Spain and Gibraltar. By Clive Finlayson. Illustrated by Mike Langman. (Prion, Perry, 1993. 89 pages. ISBN 1-87-1104-033. Paperback £9.75) As with previous books in this series (covering Morocco, *Brit. Birds* 83: 292, Nepal, *Brit. Birds* 81: 675, and Seychelles), the layout and design are crisp, clear and very

easy indeed to follow. As well as accounts of the best birding areas, with appropriate maps, there is excellent advice on how to travel, whether to hitchhike, dangers from theft, illness or bulls (and cows!), what weather to expect and what clothing to take. Don't dream of visiting this area without reading this book thoroughly beforehand and taking it with you.

JTRS

Birds on Lowland Farms. By **Peter Lack.** HMSO, London, 1992. 140 pages. ISBN 0-85661-043-7. Paperback £14.95. This excellent book is about the impact of management of lowland farms (defined as those below 300 m) on birds. It results from a collaboration between the British Trust for Ornithology, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Ministry of Agriculture. The book aims to describe what birds need and use in the farmland landscape, which factors are most important in deciding distribution and abundance, what the effects of different management practices are, and how management may be improved for birds within viable farming.

Does it succeed? Yes! Each chapter includes management recommendations, and a final chapter lists eight general principles for managing farmland for the benefit of birds. The conflicts between conservation and the most profitable farming are firmly admitted and sensible compromises suggested. It is clear, well written and comprehensive. I recommend it highly.

MICHAEL SHRUBB

The Natural History of the Oak Tree. By **Richard Lewington & David Streeter.** (Dorling Kindersley, London, 1993. 60 pages. ISBN 0-7513-0048-9. £12.99) Fungi, bugs, galls, beetles, moths, the lot: all illustrated in 60 painting-filled pages, knowledgeably annotated. A look-and-browse book.

JTRS

Whistling in the Dark: in pursuit of the Nightingale. By **Richard Mabey.** (Sinclair-Stevenson, London, 1993. 120 pages. ISBN 1-85619-176-1. £9.99) To quote the author, 'This book does not set out to be an ornithological study . . . *Whistling in the Dark* is an episodic account . . . through the matted thickets of medieval poetry, adolescent romanticism and animal psychology, and the scrubby wastes where they overlap.'

JTRS

A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali: the Greater Sunda Islands. By **John MacKinnon &**

Karen Phillipps, with Paul Andrew & Frank Rozendaal. (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993. 507 pages. ISBN 0-19-854035-3 (hbk); 0-19-854034-5 (pbk). Hardback £50.00; paperback £25.00) This guide illustrates all 820 bird species of the Greater Sundas in colour for the first time, with 88 plates which are both attractive and generally accurate, despite some problems with scale (e.g. compare Garnet and Giant Pittas). Unfortunately, the concise text is frequently too superficial and the layout is rather wasteful of space: the species descriptions are often little more than extended plate captions, simply describing features which can be seen readily on the plates, with little detail on difficult plumages or comparison with similar species. Zoogeographically, it would have been useful to include the Malay Peninsula, which essentially shares the same avifauna. Nevertheless, this book is essential for anyone visiting the region and will remain the standard for some years.

NIGEL REDMAN

The Hawkmoths of the Western Palearctic. By **A. R. Pittaway.** (Harley Books, Great Horkesley, 1993. 240 pages. ISBN 0-946589-21-6. £55.00) This is another in the wonderful series of definitive volumes published by Harley Books. Produced in association with the Natural History Museum, this covers all 57 West Palearctic hawkmoths (Sphingidae), illustrated in colour by photographs of mounted specimens (imagos) or by paintings (larvae). The book is dedicated to the memory of the late L. Hugh Newman (1909-1993).

JTRS

The Peregrine Falcon. 2nd edn. By **Derek Ratcliffe.** (T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1993. 454 pages. ISBN 0-85661-060-7. £25.00) The classic monograph, first published in 1980 (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 74: 310-311), now updated especially in relation to the increase in numbers of Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* not only in Britain and Ireland but also in many other parts of its world range, and with the incorporation of much new information on the biology of the species.

JTRS

Bats of Britain and Europe. By **Wilfried Schober & Eckard Grimmberger.** **Consultant Editor Dr Robert E. Stebbings.** (Hamlyn Publishing, London, 1993. 224 pages. ISBN 0-600-57965-1. Paperback £8.99) One third of this field guide is devoted to the biology of bats in general and the rest to individual accounts of the 30

European species and an identification key. Illustration is almost entirely by means of photographs. There is relatively little on identification in the field (as distinct from in the hand), though there are sonagrams for 20 species. Ranges are described, but there are no distribution maps.

JTRS

A Supplement to Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World. By Charles G. Sibley & Burt L. Monroe. (Yale University Press, London, 1993. 108 pages. ISBN 0-300-05549-8. Paperback £19.95) With 108 pages, densely packed with hundreds of amendments and corrections (everything from minor spelling mistakes to new splitting or lumping of species), this is an essential purchase for everyone owning and using the Sibley & Monroe tome (1990). The authors now recognise 9,699 species (in 2,063 genera).

JTRS

Puffins. By Kenny Taylor. Illustrated by John Cox. (Whittet Books, London, 1993. 128 pages. ISBN 1-873580-06-1. £7.99) One is bound to ask whether another book on the Puffin *Fratercula arctica* is justified, but here the answer is 'Yes'. Could one say otherwise, when the author has spent years studying Puffins?

This informative book is much enlivened by John Cox's illustrations, both serious (if one can say that about this bird), and cartoons, to which the Puffin admirably lends itself. If you do not have a book on Puffins, then buy this one, and make sure a friend who has yet to experience the thrill of a Puffin colony has one as well.

DAVID SAUNDERS

Where to Find Birds in North East Queensland. By Jo Wieneke. (Jo Wieneke, Belgian Gardens, Queensland, 1992. 124 pages. ISBN 0-646-06975-6. Paperback A\$15.00) This bird-finding guide covers the areas around and between Cairns and Townsville. The first half is a guide to sites, which seems detailed and accurate, and includes clear maps of each area. The second half comprises a systematic list, with a sentence or two about the status of each species, a very useful key for identifying the northern rainforest possums (Phalangeridae) which are a highlight of any spotlighting trip and much easier to find than owls, a selected bibliography, and lists of cassette recordings, maps and guides. This excellent source of information for anyone visiting this part of Queensland is recommended.

DAVID FISHER

ALSO RECEIVED

The Japanese Crane: bird of happiness. Revised edn. By Dorothy Britton & Tsuneo Hayashida. (Kodansha International, Tokyo, 1993. 64 pages. ISBN 4-7700-1768-5. £22.50)

Healing the Planet: strategies for resolving the environmental crisis. By Paul R. Ehrlich & Anne H. Ehrlich. (Surrey Beatty, Chipping Norton (NSW), 1992. 366 pages. ISBN 0-949324-46-9. Paperback A\$22.00)

Photographic Field Guide. Birds of Britain and Europe. 2nd edn. By Jim Flegg. Photographs by David Hosking. (New Holland, London, 1993. 256 pages. ISBN 1-85368-244-6. Hardback £14.99. ISBN 1-85368-263-2. Paperback £9.99) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 84: 31-32)

The Birds of Cyprus. BOU Checklist No. 6. 2nd edn. By Peter Flint & Peter Stewart. (BOU, Tring, 1992. 234 pages. ISBN 0-907446-14-0. Hardback £22.50) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 76: 600)

The Macmillan Field Guide to Bird Identification. 2nd edn. By Alan Harris, Laurel Tucker & Keith Vinicombe. (Pan Macmillan, London, 1993. 224 pages. ISBN 0-333-59280-8. Paperback £7.99) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 82: 421)

Born to Sing: an interpretation and world survey of bird song. Reprint. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and London, 1973. 304 pages. ISBN 0-253-32729-6. Hardback £28.50. ISBN 0-253-20743-6. Paperback £11.99) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 66: 403-404)

Eric Hosking's Owls. 3rd edn. By Eric Hosking with Dr Jim Flegg. (Michael Joseph, London, 1993. 171 pages. ISBN 0-7207-1601-2. Paperback £12.99) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 75: 435)

Where to Watch Birds in Scotland. 2nd edn. By Mike Madders & Julia Welstead. (Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1993. 313 pages. ISBN 0-7136-3704-8. Paperback £11.99) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 84: 77-78)

Newman's Birds of Southern Africa. 1991 update. 3rd edn. By Kenneth Newman. (HarperCollins, London, 1992. 480 pages. ISBN 0-00-219950-5. Paperback £14.99) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 78: 688-689)

Florida Bird Species: an annotated list. By William B. Robertson Jr & Glen E. Woolfenden. (Florida Ornithological Society, Gainesville, 1992. 260 pages. Hardback \$22.95. Paperback \$17.95)

A Birder's Guide to Wyoming. By Oliver K. Scott. (American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, 1993. 246 pages. ISBN 1-878788-02-7. Paperback \$14.95)

Studies of West Palearctic birds

192. Bullfinch*



Ian Newton

In many respects, the handsome Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* is quite distinct from most other finches of the West Palearctic region. Its coloration is striking, more different between the sexes than with other finches, and both adult and juvenile plumages lack any hint of streaking. The feathers themselves have a soft, silky texture, quite unlike those of other finches. The bill structure is also unique, both the rounded shape and the pattern of grooves on the palate, which function in feeding. For while, like other finches, the Bullfinch eats mainly seeds, it includes a much greater proportion of fleshy fruits and tree buds in its diet than do the other species. Behaviourally, the Bullfinch has been described as 'quiet and unobtrusive'. It remains inconspicuous, even in the nesting season, and, as explained later, it has unusual courtship and breeding behaviour. Another peculiarity, which is well known to bird-ringers, is that it seldom struggles when handled, but usually lies limply with open bill. No other European finch behaves in this way.

Despite the bright plumage of the males, Bullfinches are never easy to see. They usually betray their presence by their piping calls or by the flash of white rumps as a small party is flushed from a feeding site. The piping call is quite unlike the multisyllabic twittering calls of *Carduelis* finches, and is uttered mainly by isolated individuals, apparently wishing to re-establish contact, or by startled birds, suddenly flushed from a feeding site. It is also given in flight. Otherwise, Bullfinches in a group maintain contact with one another using a faint pipping note, which precedes or accompanies short moves within a tree or bush.

In distribution, the Bullfinch extends from Ireland, across Eurasia, to Japan. In general, individuals are larger and brighter towards the north and towards the tops of mountain ranges. The British birds are given subspecific rank (*P. p. nesa*) because they are smaller than *P. p. pyrrhula* from northern Europe and

*This paper, and others in this long-running *British Birds* series, will be published in a forthcoming HarperCollins book.

Siberia, and darker and duller than other continental forms (notably *P. p. coccinea*). The most curious race is *P. p. murina* of the Azores Islands, in which the male has lost the bright coloration typical of other Bullfinches, and looks like the female (Bibby *et al.* 1992).

Over most of their Eurasian range, Bullfinches breed at low density in forests dominated by coniferous trees, but in western Europe they also extend into broadleaved woodland. In Britain, they are widespread, breeding in woodland undergrowth, thickets, shrubberies and tall straggling hedgerows, and in the parks and gardens of towns. In various parts of Europe, densities of up to five pairs per km² have been recorded, rising to more than 20 pairs per km² in patches of especially good nesting habitat, such as scrub or thicket spruce. They are usually seen singly or in pairs, but, at favoured feeding sites, parties of up to a dozen or more are not infrequent, especially in autumn and winter. Such groups are only loosely bound, however, and throughout the day individuals continually arrive at and leave the feeding site, apparently behaving largely independently of one another. When disturbed, they retreat rapidly into the nearest cover.

When numbers of Bullfinches are feeding together, for example in a fruiting tree, aggression between them is frequent. In the typical threat display, one crouches with its tail twisted to one side, head feathers sleeked and open bill directed towards an opponent, uttering a hoarse braying sound, which carries only about 20 m (Hinde 1955). Where feeding positions are scarce, there are also frequent supplanting attacks, in which one bird flies directly at another, which flees, allowing the attacker to perch in its place. In extreme cases, the attacker may chase its victim for a few metres, but such chases are more often associated with pair formation than with feeding.

Feeding behaviour

For most of the year, as mentioned above, Bullfinches feed on the fruits of certain trees and herbaceous plants, switching from one favoured species to another as each in turn comes into crop. During the growing season, many seeds are eaten in a soft, unripened state. In English woodland, preferred seeds include those of dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, birch *Betula*, meadow-sweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, bramble *Rubus*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, while on cultivated land the seeds of many common weeds are eaten, starting in spring with chickweed *Stellaria media* and dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, and followed in turn by various buttercups *Ranunculus*, sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*, redshank *Polygonum persicaria*, fat-hen *Chenopodium album*, common nettle and various docks *Rumex* (Newton 1967, 1972).

Towards the end of the growing season, Bullfinches turn increasingly to the seeds that will sustain them through the autumn and winter, initially those of nettle, birch and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, and later those of bramble, dock and ash (and, in upland areas, heather *Calluna vulgaris*). Where it is available, ash forms a major winter food, but Bullfinches feed chiefly from certain individual trees, sometimes completely stripping them during the course of a winter, while avoiding the majority of still-laden trees in the vicinity. Such highly selective feeding occurs because ash seeds contain poisonous phenolic

compounds (Greig-Smith & Wilson 1985), which, to the human palate, give the seeds a bitter taste. The seeds from preferred trees have lower phenolic content than those from other trees, and also tend to have higher fat contents.

As seed supplies are not replenished during the winter, the size of the initial crops, and the rate at which they are depleted, influence the date when they run out, and Bullfinches have to switch from seeds to buds. In southern England, in years of good ash crops, Bullfinches can continue to feed on seeds until February or March, before switching wholly to buds. In years with no ash crop, however, the seeds of other food-plants are usually eaten by January, and the switch to buds occurs earlier. In these poor seed years, Bullfinches can suffer heavy mortality because buds are often still small then, and poor in nutrients. In January, on a diet of buds alone, the birds may rapidly lose weight, and only later in the year, when buds are larger, can they subsist on buds alone (Newton 1964). The implication is that, in years of poor seed crops and late bud-swell, food supply can be an important factor limiting Bullfinch numbers (but see later).

Among the buds of wild trees that are eaten in spring, favourites include blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, and, where available, also crab apple *Malus sylvestris*. It is only the centres of the buds which are swallowed, the parts otherwise destined to become fruit. The outer parts are peeled off in the bill and discarded, littering the ground below. Within any one tree species, the birds tend to return repeatedly to those individual trees whose buds are most advanced. In late spring, as buds open, Bullfinches turn to the flowers, shedding the outer parts and swallowing the ovules. Flowers of willow *Salix*, oak *Quercus* and crab apple are especially favoured, and form the bulk of the diet until fresh seeds become plentiful again.

For fruit-growers and gardeners, the Bullfinch creates problems, because it eats the buds from fruit and ornamental trees, reducing the blossom and hence the crop. Cultivated fruit trees have buds of the size most acceptable to Bullfinches, and are derived from wild species whose buds are preferred in natural conditions. Various ornamental trees, such as forsythia *Forsythia*, are also attacked in spring, partly because their early flowering requires early bud-swell, ahead of native trees.

A single Bullfinch can remove the buds from fruit trees at 30 or more per minute, and in winter the feeding is remarkably systematic, as a bird works along each branch taking all but the terminal buds (Newton 1972). As Bullfinches enter orchards from the adjacent woods and hedgerows, they attack the nearest trees first, penetrating farther into the orchard as the days go by. For this reason, damage is often most marked on the edges of orchards, and declines towards the centre.

In general, among cultivated fruits, the buds of plum and pear are most preferred, with gooseberries and currants next, followed by apples and cherries, but within any one type of fruit certain varieties are preferred to others. Among pears, for example, 'Conference' is preferred to 'Comice', so that, in a mixed orchard at blossom time, 'Conference' trees may be almost denuded of flower, while the adjoining 'Comice' are in full bloom (Newton 1964). The preferences for certain varieties are again linked with earlier

bud-swell, with higher nutrient content, notably protein and fructose, and in some varieties with lower concentrations of offensive chemicals (Summers & Jones 1976; Greig-Smith 1985a). In January, captive Bullfinches lose weight less rapidly when fed on 'Conferencé' pear buds than when fed on 'Comice' pear or wild hawthorn buds (Newton 1964; Summers 1982).

In England, the Bullfinch was considered an orchard pest as long ago as the sixteenth century, when one penny was offered in reward for 'everie Bulfynche or other Byrde that devoureth the blowthe of fruit'. In southeast England, however, Bullfinch numbers increased enormously in the 1950s, making this for a time the biggest problem that the fruit-growing industry had to contend with. Almost every fruit-grower had little option but to trap Bullfinches (using cage-traps with a live decoy) throughout the winter and spring, and many growers in well-wooded areas caught more than a thousand Bullfinches each year. Although this trapping helped to reduce the damage, the fact that the catches were maintained year after year showed that it had no sustained effect on Bullfinch numbers. Then, gradually, from the mid 1970s, Bullfinches became scarcer again, the catches on most farms declined, and the damage dropped to acceptable levels. Nowadays few, if any, fruit-growers continue a regular trapping programme.

As it happens, the rise and fall of the Bullfinch coincided with the fall and rise of its main predator, the Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. This raptor declined in the 1950s, following the introduction of organochlorine pesticides, disappearing almost completely from the fruit-growing areas of southeast England. Its numbers recovered in the 1970s and 1980s, following reductions

232. Female Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* eating blackberries *Rubus*, Cambridgeshire, October 1991 (I. Wyllie). These fruits form a major food item, being eaten from the time they ripen in late summer until long after the flesh has withered in late winter





233. Juvenile Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* eating berries of honeysuckle *Lonicera perichlymenum* (John Markham). Juveniles of both sexes have brown body plumage and lack the black cap and bib of adults

in organochlorine use (Newton 1986). Moreover, in the West, where Sparrowhawk numbers recovered up to ten years earlier than in the east, Bullfinch damage also declined earlier. If these events were causally connected, there are two possible explanations. First, Sparrowhawks, by their predation, might have had a direct effect on Bullfinches, holding their numbers at a much lower level than occurred in the absence of Sparrowhawks. Alternatively, Sparrowhawks might have affected Bullfinches indirectly, the absence of the predator encouraging the prey to venture farther from cover than usual, thereby bringing more food within reach, which in turn could have promoted the rise in numbers (Newton 1967). At the time of their peak numbers in the 1960s, Bullfinches fed regularly in more open situations than formerly, and I saw several flocks of more than 100 individuals in fields, more than 100 m from cover. It is hard to say whether access to the food-plants in open habitat led to the increase in numbers, or whether the increase in numbers forced the Bullfinches to feed in more open areas than formerly. So, if the Sparrowhawk was indeed involved in the changes in Bullfinch numbers, the precise mechanism is uncertain. It is ironical, however, that chemicals used to destroy arthropod pests in orchards may have indirectly created a more serious bird pest.

The Bullfinch uses the same bill movements for dealing with almost all its foods, whether these are seeds, buds, berries, seed-pods or capsules (Newton 1972). The object is nipped off, held lengthwise and crushed in the bill, then turned by the tongue against the lower jaw, so that the outer layer—the husk of a seed or the flesh of a fruit—is peeled off. It is also the only European finch known to eat small snails, crushing and deshelling them in the bill by the

same procedure. The jaws are weak, however, and a peck from a Bullfinch is trivial compared with a bite from the similar-sized Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*.

With dandelions and similar plants, the Bullfinch attacks the seed head at the side, biting out small pieces which are turned in the bill to extract the seeds. It is thus limited to feeding on those Compositae, such as sow-thistles, which have small, soft seed heads, and does not normally tackle the larger thistles. With its rounded bill, the Bullfinch cannot easily take small seeds from the ground, but it will take large ones, such as those of sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. It also has difficulty in picking seeds out of cones, so does not normally feed directly from conifers.

In its feeding, the Bullfinch is able to cling to twigs and plant stems, and can also hover to obtain fruits from the ends of branches or other difficult sites. Unlike some *Carduelis* finches, however, it does not hang upside-down to feed, nor does it hold food-items under its feet while they are worked with the bill.

Parent Bullfinches raise their young from hatching on a mixture of soft seeds and small invertebrates, especially caterpillars, spiders and small snails. This diet is selected especially for the chicks. As the young grow, the proportion of animal material is gradually reduced until, by the time they leave the nest, they are getting seeds alone. The adults carry food to their young in special throat pouches, which open one on each side of the tongue. When full, these pouches give the bird a swollen-throated appearance. Some other finches, notably the Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*, the trumpeter finches *Bucanetes* and the rosy finches *Leucosticte*, have similar throat pouches, perhaps reflecting a close affinity between these genera. Other cardueline finches carry food to their young in their gullets, and have no special structure for the purpose.

Breeding behaviour

In its breeding behaviour, the Bullfinch again departs markedly from the usual cardueline pattern (Newton 1972). The bird is not obviously territorial, nor does it nest in loose colonies like the *Carduelis* finches. It has no flight-display or other conspicuous behaviour, and the song, which is usually delivered from within cover rather than from a vantage point, is so weak that it carries no more than a few metres. Indeed, in the breeding season, the pairs seem to keep themselves to themselves, 'maintaining a low profile', and having little or no contact with other Bullfinches except when they meet at feeding sites. On the other hand, those types of behaviour connected with the pair-bond are greatly elaborated, compared with other finches. All the displays are mutual, and may be initiated by either sex, with the hen playing almost as active a role as the cock, and adopting similar postures. In the typical display, the belly feathers are puffed out, and the tail twisted towards the partner, while the birds make bowing and nibbling movements with the bill. The cock feeds the hen by regurgitation, reaching up and placing the food in her bill, while she pivots from side to side.

The statement that Bullfinches pair for life was frequent in early bird books, and was probably based on the fact that pairs are often seen in winter, as well as in the breeding season. In a study of Bullfinches in southern England,



234. Female Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* brooding small chicks, Cambridgeshire, June 1992 (*I. Wyllie*). Until the young are half grown, the female stays at the nest while the male collects the food. When the young are larger, both parents collect the food and visit the nest together

235. Male Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* feeding on seeds of common nettle *Urtica dioica*, a favoured autumn food, Cambridgeshire, October 1991 (*I. Wyllie*). Bullfinches can cling to vertical stems with ease, but, unlike some other finches, they cannot hang upside-down to feed



Wilkinson (1982) recorded the sex composition of all the groups he encountered outside the breeding season. In groups of two individuals, a male-female combination was significantly commoner than expected by chance, while groups of two males or two females were significantly less common. Moreover, in larger groups an equal sex ratio was again commoner than expected by chance. Aggression within feeding groups was found to increase with group size, but whenever a group contained more males than females fights were more frequent than expected on the basis of group-size alone. Males started more attacks than females, and directed them almost entirely at other males; when females initiated aggression, they attacked other females more often than males. These findings again suggested that activities associated with pair-bonding were frequent in winter.

In his study of captive Bullfinches, Nicolai (1956) found that each young bird formed a close liaison with one of its siblings when only six or seven weeks old and still in juvenile plumage. The birds 'caressed each other', fed each other, and invited each other to mate, but none of their actions was proficient and no mating took place. At this stage, there was no colour difference between the sexes, and two cocks or two hens often paired together. Such pairs remained together, performing mutual displays throughout the winter, but broke up in the following spring when each bird formed a normal relationship with an unrelated bird of the opposite sex. Nicolai suggested that this represented the appearance, in incomplete form, of behaviour which would keep the pair together in later life. Proof from ringing that pairs stay together in the wild, either through the winter or from year to year, is, however, lacking. The social system of the Bullfinch would clearly repay further study.

Like most other passerines, Bullfinches normally breed for the first time when they are less than one year old. As the breeding season approaches, the pairs separate from the groups, avoiding all contact with other Bullfinches. Both sexes pick up nest material, but the female does the building, at all times accompanied closely by the male. This would now be interpreted as 'mate-guarding', by which the male protects his paternity. The nest is usually built well within a thick shrub 1-2 m above the ground, occasionally higher. It is well hidden, and is placed on a flat branch or tangle of twigs, seldom in a fork. It is a distinct two-layered structure, having a shallow base of thin dry twigs and a lining of rootlets, again quite different from the nests of *Carduelis* finches. The eggs number three to six, and are bluish-white with purple-brown spots. Incubation takes 12-14 days and the young stay in the nest for 15-17 days if undisturbed. The hen incubates the eggs and broods the chicks, being fed at the nest by the cock, who calls her off and regurgitates food into her bill. She returns to the nest and in turn regurgitates the food into the open bills of the chicks. Once the young are about half grown, and can be left unbrooded, both parents collect the food and feed the young, foraging and visiting the nest together. If necessary, the adults may regularly fly more than 1 km from the nest to reach good feeding areas.

After leaving the nest, the young are fed by their parents for a further 15-20 days. For about half this time, they remain near the nest, but then begin to accompany their parents to feeding sites. The young become fully independent at about 35 days old. Much of their food in the post-fledging



236. Pair of Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* feeding young, Lancashire, summer 1974 (Dennis Green). Note the swollen throat pouch of the right-hand adult, in which food for the young is stored. The young themselves hold the food temporarily in the gullet, and it can be seen through the transparent neck skin, enabling different items to be identified

period may be provided by the male, because the female often begins another nest then (Nicolai 1956; Bijlsma 1982).

The breeding season varies with latitude, but, as with most seed-eaters, is relatively long. In southern Britain laying usually extends from late April (in early springs only) to late July, so that the latest young fledge in August. But, in some years of abundant food, laying extends into September, so that the last young fledge in October. This would give time for up to three broods per pair in a short season, and up to four in a long one, but few (if any) pairs could raise this number, because of heavy predation on the eggs and chicks. In Wytham Wood, near Oxford, about 85% of the nests that were started in May were lost to predators, declining to 50% in June and 30% in July-August. In farmland, predation was less, declining from 56% to 33% and 16% (Newton 1972). The main predators were probably weasels *Mustela nivalis*, Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius* and Magpies *Pica pica*, and the seasonal

decline in predation was associated with a gradual thickening of cover through plant growth which made the nests harder to find. The greater success of farmland nests was probably because bushes were thicker there (through hedge-clipping) and predators were scarcer. In addition to predation, some nests failed through desertion, especially during spells of wet weather. Similar seasonal trends in nest success were noted in the Netherlands (Bijlsma 1982).

Because so many nests fail, it would be easy to overrate the role of predation in limiting breeding success. A repeat nest is usually started within a few days of the loss of a previous one, so that a pair might lose several clutches and still have enough of the season left in which to raise young. The wild Bullfinches studied by Nicolai (1956) in Germany usually reared two broods each year, but laid up to five clutches to get them. In captivity, if the eggs were taken away, the number sometimes rose to seven clutches a year. Despite the high predation in my own Oxford study, the ratio of young to adults as determined from mist-netted samples at the end of short breeding seasons (last young in August) was usually around 3:1, and after a long season (last young in October) it was 5:1.

Moult, mortality and movements

After breeding, Bullfinches moult. The adults take 10-13 weeks to replace their entire plumage, and the juveniles take seven to nine weeks to replace their body feathers, retaining the flight and tail feathers for another year. In both age groups, the shorter periods are recorded from individuals that begin latest in the year (Newton 1966). Most adults start moulting while they are feeding their last brood and, because individuals vary greatly in the dates of their last nests, they also vary in the dates they moult. In five years near Oxford, the start of moult in the population I studied was spread over eight weeks from mid July, but, in a sixth year when some pairs prolonged their breeding, the start of moult was spread over 13 weeks from mid July.

The average annual mortality of British Bullfinches has been calculated from ringing recoveries at $52 \pm 3\%$ (mean \pm standard error) for males and $59 \pm 3\%$ for females (Dobson 1987). This difference between the sexes is statistically significant, and may account for the fact that, among large samples of Bullfinches seen or trapped, males are usually more numerous than females (Newton 1972; Greig-Smith & Wilson 1984).

In Britain, Bullfinches are classed as 'resident', because they do not migrate but simply disperse in any direction from the natal area. In autumn, they can appear at many places, including offshore islands, where they do not breed. Of 1,552 ringed Bullfinches recovered in Britain during 1910-74, 80% had moved less than 5 km from where they were ringed, and only about 5% had moved more than 25 km (Summers 1979). Significantly more long movements were recorded after 1960 than before, associated mainly with years of high population and poor tree-seed crops. Movement was especially marked in the winter of 1961/62, a year of widespread tree-crop failure, and again in 1964/65 and 1967/68. More recent studies, with radio-tagged birds, have revealed that individuals may remain for weeks or months within a short distance of a good food source, before suddenly moving up to several kilometres to a new site (Greig-Smith & Wilson 1984; Greig-Smith 1985b).

Such movements are often associated with the exhaustion of a food supply, and a fall of snow will often bring Bullfinches into new areas, where there was previously none, if food is locally available. Because there is no territoriality or other social restriction on movements, any given locality in wooded terrain may be within the range of hundreds of Bullfinches, which may account for the large numbers killed over several months in particular orchards, far more than could live there at any one time. Farther north in Europe, Bullfinches perform regular migrations, but again the movements are much more marked in years of widespread failure of relevant tree-seed crops. In northern Fennoscandia, Bullfinches that remain in years of tree-crop failure depend largely on handouts from human beings, for the birds are regular visitors to garden feeding trays, taking sunflower and other seeds. It is strange that this habit has never caught on in Britain.

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Sky Larks set-aside

The folly of hasty decision-making over the management of rotational set-aside has meant that hoped-for improvement in the breeding performance of Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*, and other birds using the fields, has not been realised.

Monitoring by the BTO showed that large numbers were attracted away from adjacent crops into the new habitat, for nesting. Farmers were compelled to control weed growth on the set-aside by early summer, which meant that many nests of ground-nesting birds, which contained eggs or young, were destroyed.

This, of course, is what would have happened if the birds had had only crop fields to nest in, but normal farming activities would have caused the damage. In effect, then, the birds have fared just the same—badly.

It is expected that the rules will be changed before next summer, so that farmers will not be required to control weeds on their rotational set-aside during the critical period from April to June. Let us hope that next year will see a great improvement in success for breeding birds in set-asides. Perhaps, for the Sky Lark, it will help to bring a stop to its decline on arable farmland.

Eggs?—not likely

We were amazed to see, in the *Financial Times* of 20th August 1993, that it is now possible to buy reproduction wild-bird eggs. A company has produced replicas of about 50 common and unusual species. The collection, we read, 'is a "conservation-friendly" alternative to the illegal practice of nest-raiding'. We learn that the RSPB is not very keen on the idea. It feels, quite rightly we think, that if these products get into the hands of youngsters they could encourage them to look for the real thing. Furthermore, those who developed the product

clearly have little notion of what motivates the true collector. It is not just the appearance of an egg, but how it varies with the rest of the clutch, how this year's clutch compares with last year's, and so on. We cannot imagine that egg-collectors will be in the least bit interested in them, apart from an initial curiosity. Replica eggs are used by biologists in studies where the real eggs may be removed temporarily for examination (under licence), but these are often pretty crude affairs, since a perfect reproduction is not necessary.

British Birdwatching Fair

As a first-time attender I was very impressed with the size of the Fair (at Rutland Water during 20th-22nd August 1993), with the interest provided by the very many stands, and by the numbers attending, though it never seemed too crowded. The only complaint seemed to be that, because of its size, two days were needed to do it justice.

There was plenty to see and do, with, so it seemed, hundreds of stands offering optical and photographic equipment, bird books, bird holidays and much, much more. Whatever your interest, there was someone there to talk to, and with luck to answer your questions.

It is said that if you wait in London at Trafalgar Square sooner or later you will meet everyone you know; it is the same at the Rutland Water Fair.

Compared with previous years, the attendance was up (10,400), and a record amount (approximately £30,000) was raised for the Polish Wetlands Appeal.

As usual, BB had a stand, featuring, amongst other things, our traditional 'Mystery photographs' competition. The winners were: Friday, J. Barclay (North Yorkshire); Saturday, David Jardine (Northumberland); and Sunday, John Cox (Essex). Well done, all three! (RJC)

Song Thrush out, Magpie in

It has always been up in the top 12, for 22 years that is, until last winter. Yes, the decline of the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* has now made its mark in the latest results of the BTO's Garden Bird Feeding Survey for the 1992/93 season. Replacing the Song Thrush is the Magpie *Pica pica*, which should be no surprise to most of us. It was seen in 72% of the gardens surveyed. Nine of the top 12 species were seen in 94% or more gardens: Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackbird *T. merula*, Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Great Tit *P. major*, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*. Blackbird and Blue Tit appeared in all (211) gardens.

With 'BB' to Thailand

The relaxed trip with the small friendly group, led by top Thai birder and artist Kamol Komolphalin and BB's Tim Sharrock, still has space for any one, two or three weeks during 13th February to 8th March 1994. Ring Sunbird for details: Sandy (0767) 682969.

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Forktail-Leica Award

Our apologies to the Oriental Bird Club: we have somehow contrived to miss the announcement that its annual award, supported as usual by Leica, would be available again this year. In December 1992, the £1,000 award was won by Deddy Juhaeni, towards his studies of the breeding distribution and ecology of the Sumba Hornbill *Rhyticeros everetti*, which is endemic to the Indonesian island of Sumba.

To learn more of this or the 1994 Award, write to the OBC Conservation Officer, Carol Inskipp, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

OBC AGM

Meet at 11 a.m. on 11th December at The Zoological Society, Regent's Park, London, to hear talks on Singapore, Laos and megapodes. The meeting will end at 5 p.m., but will be followed by 'a social event', says Oriental Bird Club Secretary Nigel Lindsey.

'Bird Watching' highlights

The December issue of *Bird Watching* puts a spotlight on Co. Kerry (the top eight sites) and on birdwatching in Hungary; Ian Wallace continues his personal history, now reaching the late 1960s; the highs and lows in the BTO's *New Atlas of Breeding Birds* are featured; and there is a report on Scilly, with rarity photographs. *Bird Watching* should be available at your local bookstall.



Mystery photographs

192 This month's mystery photograph (plate 229 on page 621) is obviously of a small passerine with an insectivore's bill. The bird is clearly in very bright light and very deep shade, so that its photographic appearance is a combination of underexposure and overexposure, giving false tones and contrast. We must, therefore, concentrate on structure and pattern rather than colour.

The mystery bird has a relatively large eye and head and, despite the shadowing of the overlying foliage, it is easy to see a very distinctively marked head with a broad white supercilium from the forehead and a dark eye-stripe. There are no very obvious marks on the wing or mantle, and the underparts are hidden from view. From the shape of the bill and the general proportions, we can deduce that this is an accentor, chat, flycatcher or warbler. The lack of streaking above excludes the accentors, even though many of the eastern species show prominent supercilia, whilst Western Palearctic flycatchers and chats do not show supercilia as distinctive as on this bird.

We are left with warblers, and it is difficult to pick the genus. The head is too well marked for *Hippolais* or *Sylvia* and the bill appears to be too thick for most *Phylloscopus* warblers, with the exception of Radde's *P. schwarzi* and Arctic Warblers *P. borealis*, whilst the general shape appears wrong for *Acrocephalus* or *Locustella* warblers. Are there any other options? Careful examination of the bill shows that not only is it quite broad for a small insectivore, but it also has a distinct hook on the tip. This is not really a feature of either Radde's or Arctic Warbler, although the former can sometimes show a 'hint' of a hook. This is, however, characteristic of the Nearctic vireos *Vireo*, of which three, Red-eyed *V. olivaceus*, Philadelphia *V. philadelphicus* and Yellow-throated *V. flavifrons*, have occurred in Britain and Ireland, and a further three are potential vagrants (Warbling *V. gilvus*, White-eyed *V. griseus* and Solitary *V. solitarius*). The combination of large head and eye, fairly stout legs, well-marked head pattern and relatively plain upperparts would support this generic identification.

Now that we are certain that it is a vireo, it is a relatively easy matter to narrow the field down. Yellow-throated, White-eyed and Solitary Vireos show double white wing-bars, broad white edges to the tertials, supercilia which do not extend behind the eye and 'spectacles'. There is no sign of these on our mystery bird. We can, therefore, be sure that it is one of the 'plain' vireos, but which one? There is considerable overlap between Red-eyed and Philadelphia, and between Philadelphia and Warbling Vireos. The distinguishing features of the three species have been described both in books (Zimmer 1985; Kaufman 1990) and in articles (Bradshaw 1992). Can we decide which this is?

Looking at the bird critically is difficult, as there is considerable shadow obscuring many of the plumage features. The most prominent mark is the supercilium, which starts as a large square blob on the forehead—indeed, on this view, it may even cross the forehead completely—and then narrows before arching over the eye and fading fairly soon after the eye. There is a continuous line from the eye to the bill, narrow at the bill but widening towards the eye. There is a large crescent-shaped, pale patch below the eye that appears to be bordered in front and below with darker areas. We cannot see whether there is a dark upper border to the supercilium because of the shadow. The rest of the plumage looks reasonably uniform, and the head is relatively large and rounded.

Red-eyed Vireo is the most likely, as it has been recorded over 80 times in the Western Palearctic compared with only two Philadelphia and no Warbling Vireos. Something is, however, not quite right for Red-eyed Vireo, even though we cannot see the characteristic, dark upper border to the supercilium. Red-eyed Vireo usually shows a straight supercilium which starts as a narrow line on the forehead, widens behind the eye and fades as it passes the rear of the ear-coverts. In addition, the pale patch below the eye is contiguous with the pale throat. Red-eyed Vireo tends to have a relatively small, angular head accentuated by its long bill. This all combines to give Red-eyed Vireo an 'angry' look and a head pattern not dissimilar to Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. Other features helpful in distinguishing Red-eyed Vireo from the other two are the aforementioned dark upper border to the supercilium and silky-white underparts washed with variable amounts of pale yellow, particularly on the flanks and undertail-coverts.

Warbling and Philadelphia Vireos are more difficult to differentiate, especially on these views, as their head patterns are very similar. Neither shows a dark upper border to the supercilium and both show a supercilium which curves over the eye and a relatively rounded head. Warbling Vireo, however, never shows such an obvious black line between the bill and the eye: there is usually a gap, so that the pale of the supercilium joins the pale patch below and surrounds the eye, giving the bird a slightly 'quizzical' look. In addition, Warbling Vireo would seldom show a supercilium as distinct as that on our mystery bird. The supercilium is usually duller (pale grey and not white or cream), while the cap is grey, rarely showing any blue tones, and noticeably paler than that of Philadelphia Vireo. In general, Warbling Vireo is a much duller bird than the other two species, with grey-brown upperparts (although immatures frequently show green tones), less contrast between the crown and the rest of the upperparts, and the underparts variably pale yellowish, often overlapping in colour tones with Philadelphia Vireo. The pattern of coloration on the underparts is different, however, with Warbling Vireo showing its most intense coloration on the flanks, lateral breast and undertail-coverts, with paler throat and central breast, whilst on Philadelphia Vireo the opposite is true. There are subtle differences in shape between the two species: Warbling Vireo tends to be larger-billed, flatter-headed and longer-tailed than Philadelphia Vireo (though not so much as Red-eyed Vireo), but an observer would need to be very familiar with both species to use this when identifying a vagrant.

Our mystery bird is a Philadelphia Vireo and shows the characteristic 'gentle' expression of that species, formed by its smaller bill, larger eye and head pattern. The distinct, white supercilium starts from a large 'blob' on the forehead, narrows in front of the eye, widens as it arches over the eye and then fades along the upper border of the ear-coverts. The pale patch below the eye tends to be surrounded by slightly darker areas and thus looks more distinct than on the other two species. It has a blue-grey crown, with no darkening at the sides, and olive-green upperparts. Some individuals show an indistinct wing-bar on the greater coverts, and this is just visible on the mystery bird, although, given the lighting conditions, this may be a photographic artefact. The underparts can vary from silky-white washed pale yellow to a uniform mid-yellow colour, but the most intense coloration is always on the throat and central breast. Philadelphia is smaller than either of the other two species, and relatively squat for a vireo. Differences between the three species are subtle, with Philadelphia and Warbling Vireos looking most similar in autumn and Red-eyed and Philadelphia most similar in spring. When encountering a vagrant, all relevant features should be noted with care.

I photographed this individual at Hecla Island, Manitoba, Canada, in late August 1991.

COLIN BRADSHAW

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Corrections

VOLUME 85

- 516 Plate 216 shows a Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* of the nominate race, not an Arctic Redpoll *C. hornemanni*.

VOLUME 86

- 171 DO MEDITERRANEAN SHAGS OCCUR IN SOUTHWEST ENGLAND? Line 4. 'December' should read 'October'.
 226 MONTHLY MARATHON. 'Ray Hobbs' should read 'Ralph Hobbs'.
 231 WADERS IN HONG KONG. Line 2. Longitude and latitude figures should be transposed.
 239 WADERS IN HONG KONG. Plate 62. 'May 1988' should read 'April 1990'.
 289 EUROPEAN NEWS. Plate 82. 'Erik Hansson' should read 'Tiesturs Klímpins'.
 324 SEASONAL REPORTS. Sound of Taransay (Western Isles), not (Orkney).



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th October to 14th November 1993

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 1st November.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Near Defford (Hereford & Worcester), 1st to at least 14th November.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Many still in southern Britain; also one, Ballycarny, Larne Lough (Co. Antrim), and two, Saleen (Co. Cork).

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Male, Ros-tellan (Co. Cork), early November to 14th November.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* Male, Dunfanaghy (Co. Donegal), 13th-14th November.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* Skomer (Dyfed), 10th-11th November.

Common Crane *Grus grus* Individual at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), present to the end of October.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Titchwell (Norfolk), from at least 1st to at least 13th November.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* Shoeburyness (Essex), from about 1st to 9th November.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* First-winter at Kilbaha (Co. Clare), from 15th October to early November.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 20th-31st October, with two on 30th.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* St Mary's (Isles of Scilly), 21st-22nd October; probable, Cape Clear Island, 29th October; Fair Isle (Shetland), 31st October to 10th November (trapped on 1st November).

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Win-spit (Dorset), 30th October to 8th November.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* Stiffkey (Norfolk), 25th October to 1st November.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Sher-ingham (Norfolk), 31st October.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Fair Isle, 22nd October; Dungeness (Kent), 2nd November.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Cape Clear Island, 19th October.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *P. proregulus* Three, Landguard Point (Suffolk), 1st November, with one staying until 10th November; Fagbury Cliff (Suffolk), 1st November; two, Wells Wood (Norfolk), 2nd November; Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 4th November; Sandwich Bay (Kent), 5th November; Climping (West Sussex), and Kessingland (Suffolk), 7th November; Kihnsa (Humberside), 7th-8th November; Lundy (Devon), 11th-12th November.

Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzii* Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork), 24th October; St Mar-garet's Bay (Kent), 3rd-5th November; New-biggan (Northumberland), 7th November.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* Cliftonville (Kent), and Blakeney (Norfolk), 1st November; South Landing, Flamborough (Humberside), 3rd-8th November; North Mainland (Shetland), 10th-12th November.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Sandwich Bay, from at least 31st October to 4th Novem-ber; Fife Ness (Fife), 5th-9th November.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* Widespread, with high numbers in many areas.

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* 12, Kearney (Co. Down), 31st October (highest-ever total for Northern Ireland).



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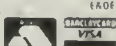
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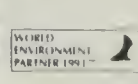
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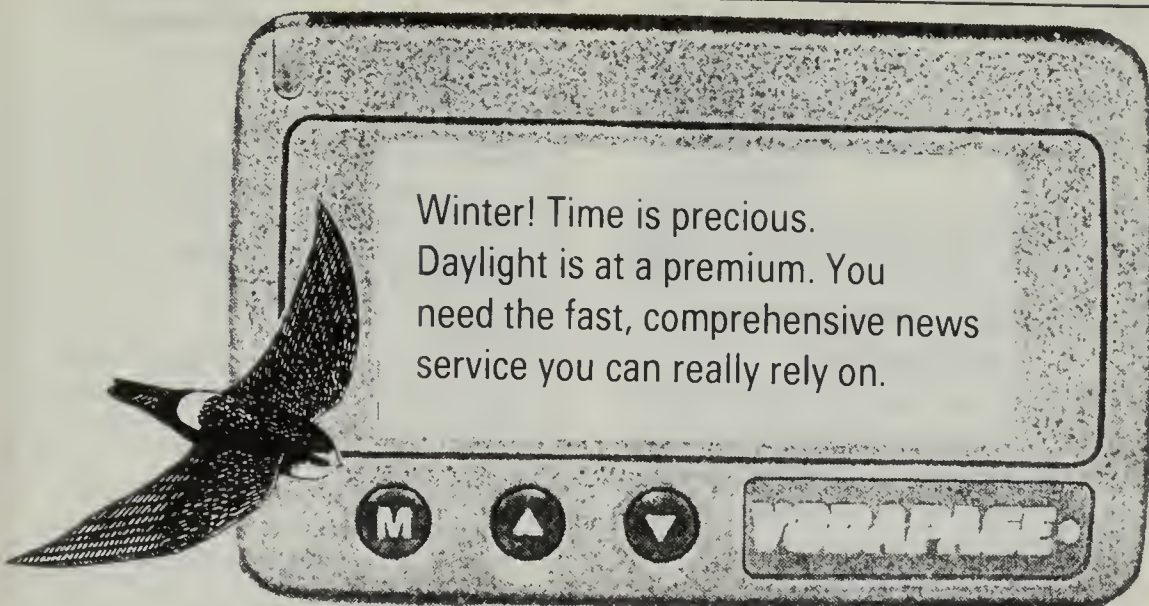
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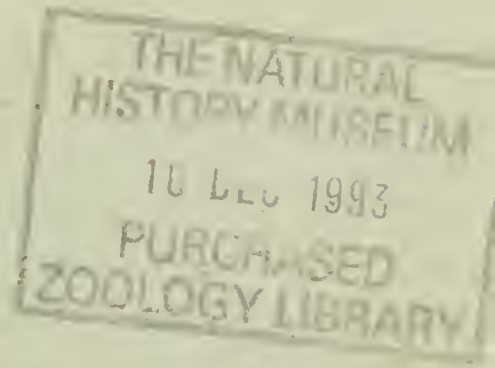
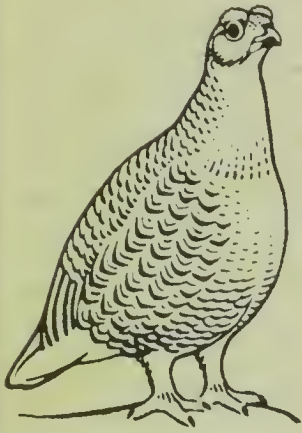
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